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ABSTRACT

A case study, in-depth description, and analysis of a youth tutoring youth program are presented in this document. The approach used in preparing the study--mainly utilizing participant observation, site visits, and structured interviews--are detailed in a separate chapter. This is followed by a chapter of background information in which the community and its schools are described, along with the process by which tutors and tutees were selected and how the program was initiated. A subsequent chapter introduces the ongoing program from the point of view of a visitor. The role of the supervising teacher, the relationship with tutors, and relationship with tutees and their teachers are also examined. The lengthiest section of the report deals with the tutors and tutees themselves, focusing on them as they relate to each other in actual situations, through the use of field notes and extensive interviews. Remaining sections describe what happened to the program when its supervisor left and was replaced by a new teacher. The program described here is said to represent a good choice for a case study because it is so average. (Author/AM)

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LEARNING AND GROWING THROUGH TUTORING
A Case Study of Youth Tutoring Youth

by Bruce Dollar
with illustrations by Nell Blaine

A Publication of
The National Commission on Resources for Youth
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Depersonalization, for the purpose of making the most general statement that will still be valid, is one of the ground rules for objective inquiry; and it reduces what you learn to so little that it can hardly be of help in understanding any real person in a real human predicament.

Edgar Z. Friedenberg

Preface

Youth Tutoring Youth is a program singularly appropriate to meet the needs both of younger children and of many adolescents. The usual classroom instruction is inadequate to stimulate and guide the learning of children whose backgrounds, interests, habits, or practices may be markedly different from the typical ones for which the instructional program was designed. These children, including the so-called disadvantaged children, require learning programs where each one can begin with tasks appropriate for his present level of achievement and proceed sequentially to more and more advanced learning, mastering each step as he moves along. This means much more individualization of instruction than is possible in classrooms as they are now organized, but it can be provided through tutoring by adolescents.

By providing this service, youth are helped substantially in their progress toward adult status. Adolescents have a difficult time in a modern industrial society. As they approach adulthood, they want successful experience in responsible positions in which their activities are appreciated and the results of their work are significant. They seek reassurance that they are needed and that they are becoming effective adults. Unfortunately, most of the current institutions of work and of social and civic action have no significant, recognized place for children and youth. Young people are kept out of adult life in the insulated and isolated environments of school and college. Responsible teaching tasks can furnish important adult roles for many of them and can meet these needs in whole or in part. Furthermore, they learn far more when performing the teaching role than when acting as students in the classroom. Properly designed, there can be a mutually rewarding relationship between the child requiring individual attention to stimulate and guide his learning, and the young person needing to undertake responsible work of recognized importance.

In its work promoting opportunities for youth participation, the National Commission on Resources for Youth early recognized the great potential in Youth Tutoring Youth programs, and worked with a number of schools to develop designs that would facilitate this mutually rewarding relationship between children being tutored and the adolescent tutors. The enthusiasm for the project displayed by children, youth, and the schools involved has led to its rapid expansion to many parts of the country. The Commission has been involved not only in the development of the program and assistance in its adoption by school systems, but also in continuing evaluation to identify difficulties as well as to document its social and educational values.

Evaluation during the initial stages of development consisted largely of reports from tutors, tutees, parents, and school personnel of their satisfactions and dissatisfactions with the program and their participation in it. These reports were useful but were limited to the individual experiences of each reporter. Tests, questionnaires, and inventories were used in several cities to obtain some comparative data. These results furnished an additional basis for evaluation, but they did not give as full and concrete a picture as many interested readers would like. The state of the art in educational and psychological measurement has not reached the point where all of the significant personal and social factors can be measured with precision. Furthermore, factors are abstractions and represent the skeleton rather than the flesh and blood of human situations.

To furnish a more life-like picture of concrete Youth Tutoring Youth activities, the author of this report was asked to spend a full academic year visiting project sites and getting to know the activities intimately, so that he could give vivid descriptions of them and of the children, youth, and adults involved. This book is his report on one of these sites. It not only enables the reader to understand the program more concretely, but it also furnishes details that are very helpful to those who attempt to develop a Youth Tutoring Youth program, since it provides suggestions about conditions that must be met in order for the program to be successful in local situations.

The book gives the reader realistic examples of programs as they actually operate in school settings. It is interesting as well as informative.

Ralph W. Tyler
Chairman
National Commission on Resources
for Youth

Foreword

Many people feel that today's youth have "never had it so good." But upon closer examination one sees that despite ever-increasing opportunities for young people in the form of academic education, our modern industrial society provides fewer opportunities for meeting their need to prepare for adulthood. Remaining in school means insulation from the workings of the real world, the prolonging of dependency, and postponement of the assumption of positions of responsibility in the adult world. When young people leave school early they find there is little need for their services in the world of work. Yet it is widely assumed that adolescence is the time in the life cycle to try out adult roles, to learn to exercise responsibilities, and to give expression to the idealism typical of that age group. Further it is recognized that the adolescents' need to be needed must be satisfied if they are to experience their own self worth. Society offers them little evidence that they are needed.

It was in recognition of this plight of American young people that the National Commission on Resources for Youth was founded in 1967 by a group of social scientists, educators, judges, and businessmen. Its mission was to promote acceptance by the American public of the idea that youth could be integrated into the adult society at an earlier age. The Commission began carrying out this mission by identifying and validating existing programs which gave young people the opportunity to assume responsible roles in the performance of valuable human services that affected other people and could provide significant change in the community. It served as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information and services which helped others initiate similar programs. It developed and distributed "how-to-do-it" materials in the form of print, film, and video-tapes about exemplary youth participation programs and also initiated the publication of a quarterly newsletter, Resources for Youth. It provided training for the personnel of schools and youth-serving agencies in the form of workshops and conferences.

The Commission also designed and piloted two models of youth participation which seemed to show promise of being widely adapted by established institutions: the Youth Tutoring Youth Program in which older children teach younger children, and the Day Care Youth Helper Program in which junior and senior high school students work with pre-school children in day care centers while pursuing a school course in child development or parenting.

An examination of the history of these demonstrations reinforces the Commission's hypothesis: that teenagers can be involved in significant activities in which they exercise real responsibility to their own benefit and to that of the community in which they serve.

The Youth Tutoring Youth Program is a good example of the type of activity that the Commission is desirous of promoting. It was piloted in Newark and Philadelphia in the summer of 1967 to demonstrate the feasibility of tutoring as a work assignment for 14 and 15 year olds who were enrollees of the Neighborhood Youth Corps. For seven weeks, 200 young people taught reading to 400 younger children on a one-to-one basis four days each week, and spent one day each week in training. The tutors were either two years behind in their school work or were known in their schools as "problems."

In Philadelphia, the program took place in six different schools, each with 20 tutors directed by a credentialed teacher and assisted by an older NYC enrollee. In Newark, it was operated in one school building with one credentialed school teacher in charge of the over-all operation of the program but with each group of 15 tutors supervised by a paraprofessional from the community. Most of the paraprofessionals were mothers, few of whom had gone beyond high school.

Each site developed its own individual characteristics. One used tutor-developed learning games extensively and the community as the prime learning resource; others maintained the usual structured school environment. At each site, there was the expectation that the tutors had the capacity to teach their younger charges and that they would themselves learn through teaching. By the end of the summer, there was evidence of gains in many areas. Absenteeism on the part of the tutors was almost unknown. Parents and teachers reported a radical change of attitudes on the part of tutors, both as to their own learning and to the assumption of responsibility. Parents reported a "growing confidence" and a "pride in their role as teacher." A sustained interest in the program is evidenced by the fact that only seven of the 200 tutors left the program, and these because of illness or to go to a higher paying job. Standardized pre- and post-tests were administered to the tutors and they showed a startling increase in reading age. The Philadelphia tutors who had started only 0.4 years behind made only one significant increase and that was in directed reading. The Newark tutors who began the summer 2.9 years behind grade level gained an average 3.5 years. It was, of course, unlikely that the Newark tutors could gain that much in a seven-week period of the summer; more likely, at least part of the leap in scores reflected a new willingness to try their best on the tests as they assumed their role of teacher and began to explore the processes of learning.

Standardized tests were not administered to the tutees in either program because there was such variation in the length of their stay in the program. There was evidence, however, that the tutees gained. There was also evidence that the parents thought well of the program: there was always a long list of parents waiting for a vacancy in which they could enroll their children. When the program ended, a number of the parents of tutees continued to pay the tutors to "help" their children.

These early results led the Commission to encourage widespread adaptation of in-school and after-school YTY programs. It began a series of workshops for persons who would operate the programs in schools and agencies. Originally these workshops were conducted at the sites of YTY programs, in order to give the trainees an opportunity to work with the tutors and their supervisors. As programs were instituted across the United States, the Commission conducted regional workshops, both to sell the idea of the program to administrators and to train those who would be directing the programs in the field. It usually used the directors of established YTY programs as the trainers.

The Commission helped to link YTY not only to operating school programs, but also to Teacher Corps, Vista, Title I ESEA Programs, and the Career Opportunities Programs of the United States Office of Education. Year by year, the number of programs grew steadily, until by 1973 over 500 cities had at least one YTY program in operation, and some cities had a number of different agencies each operating many dozen programs.

YTY has a number of unique qualities which have contributed to its widespread adoption, the most important of which is its versatility. It is readily adaptable to almost any age child (although the Commission recommends a grade/age span of at least two years between tutor and tutee), and to the teaching of almost any subject -- reading, math, science, music. The program described in this book is only one of many possible applications of the YTY concept. The same underlying principles have formed the groundwork for programs in many different kinds of communities: urban, rural or suburban; in poor, wealthy, and middle class neighborhoods; and for older and younger or gifted or average or "disadvantaged" students as well as for a whole range of social and personal development objectives. Other reasons for its spread across the country relate to some of its obvious pay-offs educationally and socially. It is low-cost, since it can be operated with one part-time adult in charge. It has minimal space requirements. It dovetails with many contemporary educational concerns, such as individualization, collaborative as opposed to competitive learning, and the self-help and human potential movements.

For all its many manifestations and incarnations, the Commission's experience with YTY has shown that successful programs seem to have a few key characteristics in common: most especially, the program requires dedicated, caring, sensitive people in charge who are willing to put their trust and respect for students who might even be below-average students, on the line and into practice. Further, the successful programs seem to permit the students to assume a major responsibility in the program, including their role with the individuals placed in their charge. Further, the better programs seem to have devised ways of letting the students not only carry responsibility, but be held accountable, in that they are allowed to feel failure, stopping short only where there is danger that extreme discouragement may creep in.

The program described in this book is a good choice for a look in depth at the Youth Tutoring Youth Program largely because it is so average. It takes place in a typical small town, in a school not particularly distinguished, and with average teachers. Interestingly enough, it did not start as a demonstration by the Commission but was set up locally. It was thought through and designed by the teachers directly involved after they had returned from a one-day "propagandizing" workshop conducted by the Commission for educators of their state. The values and commitments of this program are so well placed that it has turned out to be one of the best examples of what the Commission tries to encourage in the way of local versions of Youth Tutoring Youth. To fully tell the story of this program -- its failures as well as its successes -- precludes us from identifying the school system involved.

Bruce Dollar, the author of this report, has been a consultant to the Commission for the past three years. He spent a year in the collection of data for this study, visiting the school and discussing the program with administrators, teachers, and parents. Formerly a teacher of both young children and adolescents in the Detroit school system, he has long been interested in educational change. He has written and lectured on education in the People's Republic of China, which he visited during the summer of 1972. His articles on educational change have appeared in Saturday Review of Education, Social Policy, and other publications. Presently, he is completing a Ph.D. in Political Science at Teachers College, Columbia University.

He is also working on a report of the Commission's Day Care Youth Helper Program which will be published at a later date.

The Commission wishes to express appreciation to the Ford Foundation. Their grant enabled us to make this study as well as one resulting in a Commission publication entitled Youth into Adult (1974), by Mildred McClosky and Peter Kleinbard, and another, New Roles for Youth in the School and in the Community, published by Citation Press, October, 1974.

MARY CONWAY KOHLER
Director
National Commission on
Resources for Youth

August 6, 1974

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Chapter I: Introduction

William, a fourth grader, comes striding into the room. He's beaming, obviously delighted to be here. Larry, a high school junior, is waiting for him. He gets right down to business:

"Hi, William. Now, the first thing we're gonna do is go over those words from yesterday. And you better have learned them like I told you. They're over here on the blackboard."

William gets eight of the ten words Larry has written on the board. That's worth eight more stars on a chart Larry has made. Each day they go over words, William gets more stars. The top lines on the chart have two, then three, then five big red stars drawn on them. Now Larry has to make them smaller so they'll all fit on the line. It looks like soon he'll have to make a bigger chart.

After going over the words they settle down to work. Larry just found out that William has been learning cursive writing. So they both take a paper and head it with the alphabet in script. Then they practice some *llllll*'s.

Now, just to "warm up", Larry asks William to pick a word. William picks "loud." Then they each write a sentence with "loud" in it and compare them. Next, as they chat, Larry draws a picture of a house, garden, trees, clouds, etc., and William writes a story to go with it: "I live in a house by a tree and I have a garden. I have three flowers and every day birds fly over my house." He stops in the middle to ask how to spell 'garden'.

Larry: "How do you think? What does it start with? G, right. Then what? No, not r, something comes before r. What other word does it sound like? Car, how do you spell car? C-a-r, right, so this is just like car, only it starts with g...", etc.

By the time the story is finished, a half hour has passed and it's time for William to go. They exchange "bye"'s and "see you tomorrow"'s and William bounces out. Next time, says Larry, William will draw the picture and write the story; they'll type it up, make a little display, and put it on the wall. So this was just a dry run!

Extraordinary as this little scene may appear to an observer, there is still more to it than meets the eye - much more. For back in his classroom, William is extremely shy and withdrawn, and shuns participation in any group activities. His family is very poor and his home life sad: father sick and dying, many children in the family, not much personal attention. Small wonder, then, that he is severely behind in reading. His teacher has not found a way to overcome his problems in the class setting. At the high school, Larry is not getting the grades his intelligence would indicate he could earn. It may be that school turns him off, although he denies that. Or maybe it's because he's susceptible to the pressures of the high school social life, and yet has difficulty making friends. Or possibly he's disturbed by the complete lack of communication between him and his father.

But whatever their problems, and whatever the causes, the significant thing to Larry and William is that every day they spend a half-hour together - a half-hour that has become an important part of their lives. William gets special help on his underdeveloped reading and language skills, but more important to him, he knows that Larry takes a bus from the high school every day just to come and see him - to help him, to talk to him, to be his friend. No wonder he so eagerly does the work Larry sets out for him (which, by the way, Larry tries to make "fun" anyway), that he'll pass up a movie in his classroom in order to be with Larry, or that he'll tell one of the few adults he'll talk to at the school that tutoring is his favorite class. Larry, in the meantime, looks forward to the one period in the day when he will engage in an activity with real and immediate significance - because it involves not just his life but another individual's as well, and because he knows he is responsible for what happens as a result of choices and decisions which he judges best. One indication that he feels responsible is the way Larry bragged to anyone who would listen when he learned William had got 100 on a spelling test in his class. Its importance to him becomes clear when Larry says now that "teaching is what I want to do in my life."

The anecdote about Larry and William constitutes evidence of the viability of an idea: that an older child can capably tutor a younger child with certain tangible and predictable benefits for both. To test this idea in practice might mean an evaluative process in which the expected benefits - in terms of both performance and attitudes - would be identified, then suitable instruments for measuring them would be selected or devised, and finally those instruments would be applied to participants engaged in the appropriate activity or program. Logically, the result would either confirm or deny - to a greater or lesser degree - the idea informing the activity.

As valuable as it may be, this report departs from that conventional approach. Instead of using instruments to measure results or change, it focuses on the actual participants - like Larry and William. If they can provide evidence for the soundness of an idea, and others like them can too, then there may be an alternative, or complementary, way to assess it. The alternative proposed here is an inductive approach to evaluation, by which a program is observed over time along particular dimensions - i.e., personalities, activities and relationships - which in turn provide the basis for more general conclusions. In other words, it is the actual process of a program which is the object of inquiry here, and not merely its identifiable "components" or its measurable "outcomes": it is the behavior of real people in a real setting, with all the spontaneity and uncertainty that implies. Emphasizing the process, moreover, lends itself to the second purpose of this report. For just as important as being able to judge whether a program "works" or not (the first purpose) is learning how it works and why. These questions can only be answered by examining and reporting actual behaviors.

Such qualitative research must rely heavily on descriptive and anecdotal data, a fact which suggests an ethnographic approach. For this reason, it was decided to adopt the techniques of the participant observer,* a subjective approach that necessitates frequent use of the first person "I," a form which I shall hereafter use freely.

The approach also suggests a case study, an in-depth description and analysis of a particular program. In searching for an appropriate Youth-Tutoring-Youth program for study, I felt it was important to locate a "good" one - one that was not only working relatively well, but which promised to reward study. This meant it would have to be fairly accessible in terms of information - not tight-lipped or defensive; and it could not be too specialized in a way that might preclude its comparison with other possible locations. After visits to more than a dozen YTY sites in five cities, I came to the one described in this report. From the very first day I knew I'd found what I was after.

In a nutshell, the program was located in a semi-rural community, fifty miles from New York City, which is in rapid transition from exurbia to suburbia. The town's economic base is a combination of farms, newly located industries, local small businesses, and recently-built commuter-owned (mortgaged) housing developments; thus, the school children are socio-economically diverse. The YTY program itself was a Title I funded in-school program of seventeen high school tutors and seventeen elementary school tutees, who met every morning between 10:00 and 10:30 at the elementary school. Eleven of the tutors were girls, of whom four were Black; there were two Black and four white tutors among the boys. Of the tutees, nine were girls, eight were boys; four tutees were Black and one was Puerto Rican. Both tutors and tutees were selected according to Title I criteria of academic or social need, although the program's emphasis was on tutoring reading and language skills. The program had a supervisor - a former teacher working part time for YTY - and an aide. Administratively, it was under the school system's Division of Special Services, which handles all special programs. As for the program's accessibility - its openness to an observer - the program itself will speak through its participants in the pages of this report.

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* A definition of this term, and a description of what it meant in practice, appears in Chapter II.

The approach used in preparing this study is detailed in chapter II. This is followed by a chapter (III) of background information, in which the community and its schools are described, along with the process by which tutors and tutees were selected and how the program got started. Chapter IV introduces the ongoing program from the point of view of a visitor. The chapter after that (V) is devoted to the role of the supervising teacher. The longest section of the report, chapter VI, deals with the tutors and tutees themselves, focusing on them as they relate to each other in actual situations, through the use of field notes and extensive interviews. Chapter VII describes what happened to the program when its supervisor left and was replaced by a new teacher. And finally, chapter VIII contains a discussion of the account presented in previous chapters, plus some conclusions.

Chapter II: Approach of the Study

Research for this report was carried out using the methods of participant observation. "Methods" is in the plural, since participant observation commonly refers to a "blend of techniques" rather than a single method. This characteristic blend has been defined as involving

> some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artifacts, and openendedness in the direction the study takes.*

This approach, with its reliance on direct, unstructured interaction between the observer and his subjects, and with the open-endedness of its inquiry, does not lend itself to the standardization of procedure commonly associated with "scientific" research methods, as in testing, survey and laboratory work. For this reason it is often considered to undermine validity and reliability by permitting such factors as "observer bias," "personal equation" and "hearsay" to contaminate what should be "objective," "empirical" data. Furthermore, it is held, the nonquantitative nature of the results compromises the scientific presentation of evidence and proof for propositions.

On the other hand,

> proponents of participant observation... have sometimes championed it as being less likely than other methods to be biased, unreliable, or invalid because it provides more internal checks (of more direct nature) and is more responsive to the data than are the imposed systems of other methods. Moreover, according to such proponents, participant observation is not

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* "The Nature of Participant Observation," in Issues in Participant Observation, George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, eds. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969. (p. 1.)

> restricted to static cross-sectional data but allows real study of social processes and complex interdependencies in social systems. Therefore, they consider the data of participant observation richer and more direct.*

It is these advantages of participant observation which are seized upon in this study. By deliberately avoiding the common tendency to analyze a social process through the categories of a preconceived system, factors and concepts based in the process itself are allowed to emerge and suggest conclusions which might not have been foreseen.

These, then, are the considerations which determined my data-gathering activities in the Cobblestone YTY program. The first order of business was to get acquainted with those people most directly involved in it: the supervisor, the aide, the tutors and the tutees. Next, somewhat more delicate, was being accepted by them. The adults, fortunately, presented few difficulties: they were voluble and cooperative from the start - that is, once they were satisfied that I didn't intend to interfere with the program. Gaining the acceptance of the kids was a question of being friendly but restrained, of making no demands, but letting them come to me on their own terms. I was especially careful to avoid coming between tutor and tutee, thus invading the tutor's sphere of responsibility. Before too long my twice-weekly presence was taken for granted and, more, I was able to chat informally with most of the kids, especially the tutors, on a friendly and relaxed basis. Then, after several weeks of regular visits, I presented before the tutors some suggestions for tying language instruction to the life experiences of their tutees. This led to my being consulted from time to time by tutors looking for ideas. Eventually my rapport with the group became quite satisfactory for my purposes as an in-depth student of their activities. We grew to be friends. I had no trouble learning what was going on among individual participants at any particular time.

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* Ibid., p. 2.

My observations averaged about two a week over a four month period. A typical visit began before the tutors arrived by bus from the high school, usually with a conversation with the supervisor as she set up for the morning. When the tutors came at 9:30 there was usually a chance to talk with one or two of them in the half-hour before the tutees showed up. During tutoring, between 10:00 and 10:30, I would find a strategic place to sit where I could hear several pairs of kids as they worked. There were times when kids would take a break and I could socialize with them, but generally I would stay back while tutoring was going on. At 10:30 the tutees, then the tutors, would leave. The next thirty to sixty minutes would be spent in more conversation with the supervisor and aide. During the entire visit my notebook was at hand, and I took notes whenever necessary and appropriate. The hour or so following each visit was then used for completing and organizing the notes.

To supplement these visits to the tutoring program, a series of interviews was carried out with persons who were associated in some way with it. At the Kurtz Elementary School, one or more interviews were conducted with each of the following: assistant principal, school psychologist, director of Special Services, crisis teacher, and the classroom teachers of seven of the tutees. At the high school, there were interviews with the guidance counselors of all but two of the tutors. The parents of three tutors were interviewed in their homes, and one parent of a tutee was met at the Kurtz School.

A series of structured interviews were carried out with the tutors. These took place at the high school and lasted about an hour each. The tutors knew me well by that time (after two months of visits), and they spoke freely, providing some of the most valuable insights into the program.

Chapter III: Setting Up the Program

The Community and Its Schools

Cobbleston is a small town located some 50 miles to the south of New York City. Grim and nondescript in winter, it turns inviting and nondescript in springtime, as skeletal trees suddenly clothe themselves in dense green, and what must be a kind of town trademark - pink dogwood - blooms in profusion.

Farm country for many years, the flat, flat land in the surrounding countryside has more recently found itself in the path of spreading suburbanization. The resulting transformation is strikingly visible: business firms have bought up acreage to establish new plants and offices, and developers have covered erstwhile forests and farms with middle class houses and garden apartment complexes.

For the time being, at least, the population is economically diverse. The parents of Cobbleston's school children include employees - both white and blue collar - of the new local industries, commuters to New York City, small town businessmen, and agricultural growers and laborers. In addition to its seasonal migrant workers, the town has its resident poor, many of them lodged in government-built projects near the railroad tracks downtown. There is Welfare and AFDC in Cobbleston, and some of its students have qualified for Title I (ESEA) assistance. Ten per cent of the population is Black, and the schools have not been without serious racial tension.*

The schools have had to keep up with the expanding community, and many of their facilities are not only new, but innovative as well. The Kurtz School, for example, which houses YTY, is designed as a series of large, open, carpeted rooms, some of which accommodate up to 350 pupils at once. Everything is mobile, and classes may either be dispersed for individualized activities or gathered for group instruction, as needed. There are some mixed opinions about the merits of this "open space" approach; there is agreement, however, on the fact that some kids adapt to it better than others.

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* In 1968, the high school held its own mock Presidential election. George Wallace was "elected" with 60% of the votes.

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Madalyn Solomon, the dynamic director of the school system's Division of Special Services, administers all special educational programs for Cobbleston's students. Constantly on the lookout for funds or programs which could be utilized in the school system, it was she who first got wind of YTY through an NCRY-sponsored conference. She immediately contacted Marjorie Miles, a young, former full-time teacher who had been doing part-time tutoring since going on maternity leave earlier in the year. Ms. Miles had stood out as a very able teacher, and according to Ms. Solomon's instincts she'd be ideal as a YTY program supervisor. In being offered the job, she was told she'd have "free rein" in setting it up and operating it.

Getting Ready

Preparations were made over the Summer of 1971. Funds were applied for; the NCRY-YTY handbooks were received and studied; the high school was informed, through a guidance counselor, that fifteen tutors would soon be sought; and a request was put in to provide course credits for tutoring.*

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* Since it was to be an in-school program, there was never any involvement with Neighborhood Youth Corps, nor was there any question of paying tutors a wage. Since it was felt that a material incentive was important, high school credits seemed a logical choice.

In September, NCRY sponsored a two-day YTY workshop at a nearby university, and both Ms. Miles and Ms. Solomon attended.

By this time, the advance planning for the program had been virtually completed. This planning, according to Madalyn Solomon, was crucial to later success. As she describes it,

> Rather than say we'll play it as we go along, we really did work to set up the structure ahead of time. Marjorie especially worked hard at home. She was really champing at the bit to get started. We did things like deciding on a stance to take with the kids, an approach. Also, Marjorie designed the forms they use to write up their lessons. And she planned a schedule for the orientation workshops during the first week with the tutors, and so on.

The program had been officially approved for 5 credits for each tutor. It was decided that the tutors would spend an hour at the elemetary school each day, the first half-hour in preparation without the tutees, and the second half-hour tutoring. Counting the time needed to bus the kids from the high school, it would take up two periods of their day. Mondays were to be set aside for additional planning and evaluation without the tutees.

The program, slated to start with the school year, did not get off the ground smoothly. For one thing, the funding did not come through right away. What was more discouraging, however, was resistance encountered at the high school. The guidance counselor who had promised to recruit eligible (for Title I) tutors, turned out to be unsympathetic both to the program and to some of the initial applicants. It was later learned that ten Black girls had expressed an interest during the summer, but were turned away by the counselor, who said she suspected they were "just looking for easy grades." The high school principal was reported to be concerned about "low-rung" kids getting into special programs where they received A's, thus skewing his student rankings and rendering them "inaccurate." In any case, September came and went, and not one prospective tutor had been turned up by the high school.

Tutors

By mid-October, Ms. Miles went to the high school herself, spoke to each of the four guidance counselors, and told them she wished to begin interviewing eligible candidates right away. By the end of the week, she had a starting nucleus of twelve tutors.

Here is how she describes her selection approach:

> The only criterion I used in selecting the tutors was my own feeling about whether they seemed genuinely interested in helping little kids. I never wanted to know anything about their grades or their backgrounds or anything. I'd already decided they'd be treated as colleagues as much as possible; I trusted that the guidance counselors were only sending me kids who qualified for Title I [i.e. were underachieving or disadvantaged] so I didn't have to be concerned with their school record. Besides, as I said, I really didn't want to know about those things, I just wanted to take the kids as they were; as long as they were interested in the program.

Tutees

The search for tutees began with the school's list of Title I kids, plus the names of eligible children recommended for special help by their teachers. All were tested to verify that they were behind academically, and then interviews were conducted with the reading teachers to judge what special program each one belonged in. Those with additional social or personal problems who seemed they might benefit from the individual attention of a tutoring program were given priority for YTY. Tutees were selected from all grades, first through sixth.

Getting Started

At the end of November the funds came through and the program was finally given clearance to begin. The opening agenda called for four days of workshops with the tutors, built around such topics as acquaintance with the program and each other, creating lessons around the tutee's interests, making materials for tutoring, and utilizing audio-visual aids. A fifth day would be spent testing the tutors (a requirement for federal programs), and the sixth would be the day the tutors and tutees met each other.

Although they generally stuck to their schedule, Ms. Miles looks back on that first week as mainly a period of testing of her by the high school kids. Her pledge that they would be treated as colleagues was naturally met with a great deal of skepticism, and the tutors kept looking for the escape clauses. As Marjorie recalls it:

> I was trying to get them to believe that they were really going to be the teachers, and that they would be able to make their own decisions about what to do. One thing they wanted was a place they could smoke. They wanted to be able to smoke in the room, but I told them regular teachers couldn't even do that. But I promised them I'd get them a place where they could. Then the office said no. I really had to fight them on that, because if I hadn't come through they would've felt I couldn't deliver. They finally let us use the loading platform outside.
>
> Then they asked, what about choosing the kids they'd work with. They thought we were just going to hang a kid on them: "I guess you'll just tell us, huh..." But I said, "Not at all. Why don't we have a party and you can each choose your own tutee. We can set it up so they'll really feel warm and welcome. Would you like to make plans for it?" "Oh no, we don't want to plan." Whatever I said, they just said the opposite, testing me, you know. I told them, "But the kids'll just stand around, nobody'll know what to do. Can we at least decorate the room? Little kids really love decorations..." "No, no, no decorations" .. and so forth.

> So on that first day, wouldn't you know it, when those little ones came into the room, all the tutors stood in a bunch at one end of the room all snickering together, and there were the tutees at the other end scared out of their wits! So finally, I said, "All right, you wanted it this way, now you go over and mix!" And they did, and suddenly everybody came to life, and by the end of the period they'd all chosen tutees, and the whole thing was so much better and more natural than if we'd done it the way I wanted. And you know, the really amazing thing is how nearly all the pairs that started out that day stayed together for the rest of the year...

Where was Madalyn Solomon during this time? Here's her description of her role:

> Once the planning was done and the program was under way, Pete (the school psychologist, who had followed the program from its earliest stages) and I stayed far away from there. Marjorie had worked out an approach by which they were all colleagues, and any difficulty they were having at the high school was never mentioned. As far as they knew their problems played no part in the selection, it was just something they'd volunteered to do. Obviously they have bad associations with us: Pete's the "shrink" and I work with "dumb kids" who need extra help, and so on. If they'd been able to make a connection between us and what they were doing, they'd have felt double-crossed. So we steered clear - until finally we were invited on their own terms, because we had something to offer as professionals.* Now it's okay to go in once in a while because we have an interest in how they're doing with their tutees. But we still don't go much. And it's sure that had we become involved early on it would've been fatal to the understanding Marjorie had with them.

* * * * *

The program started out in early December with twelve tutors, each with his or her own tutee. During the New Year and semester break there were some personnel changes among the tutors. Three of them dropped out of school, and another took ill and had to leave. Meanwhile, since the program had not yet reached its authorized complement of fifteen tutors anyway, the word was out at the high school that there were openings. Ms. Miles' approach to further recruitment was to invite anyone who was interested (and who qualified) to accompany the regular tutors on the bus to the elementary school, and to "look around for a few days, see if you like it, and decide whether you want to be part of it." Everyone who came, she says, stayed, and by the end of January the group had stabilized at sixteen tutors, all of whom were enrolled for credit for the Spring semester. Six of these were sophomores, seven were juniors, and three were seniors. There were eleven girls, of whom four were Black, and five boys, two of them Black.

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* Mondays, when there was no tutoring, eventually came to be used for various speakers to come and talk to the tutors about the problems they were having in reaching their kids, or about suggestions for tutoring methods, etc. Both Pete and Madalyn were invited to address the group as specialists who could help them.

The sixteen tutees ranged through all elementary grades, first through sixth. Eight of them were boys, and eight girls; there were four Black tutees.

Chapter IV: A Typical Day

If a visitor came to the program, what might he see? By recalling, with the help of my field notes, my own first visit there, I think I can reconstruct for the reader something of what it would be like. The first thing you notice is the general atmosphere, the vibrations of the place. There is a buzz of purposeful activity, in an air of ease and relaxation. The room, the size of a smallish standard classroom (which also serves as the school's resource center), has eight tutor-tutee pairs scattered about it. Two girls work at the blackboard. A girl and her boy tutee sit at a typewriter. At the other end of the room, two boys wearing headsets stand looking in a table-top filmstrip viewer. The rest of the kids have arranged their desks in places that must make sense for each pair, but there is no discernible group pattern. On the bulletin board are a number of samples of children's work: drawings, snapshots, collages - each with some accompanying sentences or a paragraph. They're not organized into an overall display, but instead look as if they were just posted as they were completed. As you enter the room fully, and walk past the teacher's desk, you catch sight of two kids you didn't notice before: their seats are scrunched into a corner behind a seven-foot movable cabinet. They're both bent over a book, obviously deeply involved in whatever they're doing; the tutor is Black, the tutee white. As you look around now you're suddenly aware of how many pairs are integrated by sex and race. Naming the tutors first, there is a Black girl with a white boy, a white boy with a Black boy, a Black girl with a white girl, a Black girl with a Black boy, a white girl with a white boy, and so on. The pairs are so diverse, in fact, that there

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is no discernible pattern among them, no generalization or classification possible. Another thing that strikes you is the casualness with which your presence is accepted here. Nobody seems particularly concerned about you, and you're not sure whether that is attributable to their self-assurance or their absorption in their work - or both.

You've got permission to talk to the kids, ask them what they're doing, listen in and watch their work, and so on. You know better than to intrude on the two boys behind the cabinet, so you stroll over to a couple of girls near the center of the room who are chatting amiably. They have just been looking through some magazines for pictures that might illustrate a story about the summer the tutee spent in the South on a farm, and they've found some. "Excuse me for a minute, Sandra," says the tutor. "I'll get some scissors and be right back." You move on. Another tutor is holding a book that she and her tutee were just reading. "Do you really like this? You don't think it's too easy or too hard?" "It's okay," replies the tutee, a boy who may be a little over-conscious of the eavesdropping stranger. "Well, I think you can read something a little more grownup than this. I'll go see if I can find something better." The girls at the blackboard are working on cursive writing, practicing letters that begin with a curve-over stroke. The tutor seems quite serious about the lesson; her tutee has a look of total concentration. When the older girl messes up on a letter she's making, however, the spell is broken as she breaks into a smile over her own fallibility - a smile which quickly reflects itself onto the younger girl's upturned face. The next pair, two boys, are working on a spelling test. The tutee has a list of words he has been learning and now he wants to prove he knows them. If he does, you're told, then tomorrow the two of them will go to the gym and shoot some baskets. He gets seven of ten right, and that's declared "passing" - but before they go tomorrow they'll go over those three missed words again. As you leave these two, a little boy, his tutor (a girl) at his side, has just shown a mask he has made to Ms. Miles. After some words of delight, she continues, "This is the first time in your life you've done this, isn't it?"

Tutee: (nods)
Tutor: Yeah, and he's real good at it, too.
Ms. M: Oh, that's just beautiful, I think he should get an excellent on this, don't you? Robert, do you like doing this?
Tutee: (nods)
Ms. M: Would you like to work some more on it next week?
Tutee: (nods)
Ms. M: Good; well, it's almost time to go, shall I put this away for you so you can do it again next week?

Sure enough, it's 10:30, and some new pairs of kids are coming into the room. First through the door are two boys, both Black. The older one leads the way, carrying a checker board and checkers. He's grinning as he proclaims, "This time I beat *him* two outa three." The younger one smiles solicitously, almost as if he'd given his opponent a break for a change: "That's all right. *Next* time I'll beat him." In answer to your query, you're told that some of them have been working in the library, one pair goes to a science room that's always empty at this time, and another pair uses a small conference room they found where they can be alone. When the little ones have left, the tutors, some of them, make some notes in a folder with their tutee's name on it. Within a few minutes, they've said 'bye and gone to meet their bus back to the high school.

* * * * *

These scenes are quite representative of the Cobbleston program on a given day. In fact, as I've said, they more or less reproduce what I saw and heard during my own initial visit. The only important thing still missing from the picture at this point is the part played by the supervising teacher, Marjorie Miles. Her position and personality are so vital to the program, in fact, that the next chapter will focus on her. In the meantime, an incident which actually occurred on my first day there (and not described above) should help to clarify her role.

When I arrived, all the pairs had just gotten together. I was expected, so I introduced myself to Ms. Miles and asked if I could just wander around. "Oh, sure," I was told. "Just feel free to look around and talk to anyone you like. I'm sure nobody minds." After hovering over several pairs of kids - a bit awkwardly, since it meant eavesdropping on a usually private activity - I decided to try to join one pair for a longer time, just to see what was really happening. A girl was tutoring a little boy at a table that had some extra chairs, so I asked if I might join them for a while, just to listen; they said okay. But just a few minutes later, Ms. Miles came over to me and said politely, "There are some kids over here who are doing some interesting things. Would you like to come see?". A little annoyed at first at having my plan interrupted, I then began to suspect that the supervisor's action had been taken deliberately. We had a chance to talk after the kids had all left, and I asked her about it. "Yes, you're right," she began,

> there was a reason for it. A few weeks ago we had a visitor here, an education professor, I think, who decided to latch on to a couple of kids for an "in-depth" look. He sat down with one of my best tutors, Eleanor, and her tutee, and spent the whole

> half-hour with them. Eleanor became so self-conscious she was just mortified. After little Rose had left he started giving her all this advice, like for instance that she should be more warm and affectionate toward Rose, try touching her, or hugging her when she does really well. He explained that little children really crave that kind of attention. Well, Eleanor is just not like that as a person, it would be very unnatural for her, and I'm not sure how Rose would take it either. And anyway, the two of them have this fantastic rapport going that's built up over weeks. Rose just worships Eleanor, so it's not like something is missing from their relationship. He just didn't know anything about that. The next day Eleanor came to me and asked if she really had to start hugging Rose. I told her to go right ahead with the way she'd been acting all along. And then I promised her and the rest of the kids that I'd never ever allow that situation to happen again. So when I came over to you and suggested you see something else I was really making good on that pledge. We have a good program here and I wouldn't want anything to spoil it.

The supervisor's remarkable ability to identify with the needs of the kids, and the readiness to assume a protective stance against insensitive outsiders which this conversation revealed, went a long way in convincing me that this was a program worth studying. The only misgivings which remained by the end of that first visit came from the suspicion that only well-adjusted, normally-achieving high school kids had been picked to tutor. Indeed, the generally suburban milieu, plus the demeanor of the kids in the program, led one easily to such a conclusion. My impression was quickly corrected by Ms. Miles. Every one of the tutors, she told me, was an underachiever, some with added social problems. This was necessary for them to qualify for a Title I program, and she knew the guidance counselors who referred students to her had adhered to the guidelines. Just what the individual problems were she never asked, preferring to meet the tutors on their own terms as people who'd come to do a job (although as she became acquainted with them personally she learned a lot). The tutees, as well, had been picked by academic and social need, I was told.

I needed little more at that point to be convinced that I'd found a program from which others could learn much. One final anecdote clinched it. As it happened, it concerned an incident which Ms. Miles considered unfortunate. One of the tutors, a white eleventh-grader who was in chronically dire straits at the high school, had been working with a Black sixth-grade boy with severe reading problems.

> Tony, (the tutor) became so infuriated by the way he thought Alvin was being miseducated, he finally stormed down to Alvin's teacher and chewed her out right there in the hall. Well, naturally she didn't take to that too well, and it spread to the other teachers, who began wondering what I was running down here. For a while things were pretty touchy, but I managed to smooth down some feathers. Meanwhile, Tony went to attend a Board of Ed meeting so he could find out "why the schools are ruining my tutee." He kept saying, "Now I understand why I had so many problems. But I won't let them do the same thing to my tutee."

Chapter V: The Role of the Supervising Teacher

In a discussion of various approaches to individualized instruction, Maurice Gibbons analyzed the problem of selecting the key element in a program upon which to focus when describing it:

> Administrative policy does change the learning experience by modifying the relationship among teachers and between teacher and students, as occurs in the changeover from class instruction to team teaching. But administration can ultimately only organize the framework in which instruction and individual learning take place. Change in students is the fundamental purpose of individualization, but great individual differences among them make their responses widely varied, largely unknown, and, therefore, another distorted focus for categorizing programs. In fact, it is an irony of the literature that many who labor to focus instruction on the individual evaluate their success with group tests that measure gains on one dimension, or a narrow spectrum of dimensions, of accomplishment. The teacher's objectives are also a weak basis of organization. They are more often fond hopes than operationally defined directives for instruction and evaluation. And even those precisely stated may be achieved by a variety of instructional means. But what the teacher actually does can be stipulated, observed, and reported - what he provides, what he demands or allows, what role he plays... For this reason the nature of the conditions for learning provided by the teacher, from whatever source of inspiration or authority, seems the most reliable basis for describing a program.*

This passage speaks directly to the task which confronted this researcher as he sought a descriptive-evaluation approach that would be systematic, insightful, and instructive. Gibbons' conclusion here, as it happens, is the one I arrived at inductively, after months of observation, field note-taking, and analysis; namely, that it is the supervising teacher who determines the course of a YTY program, who sets a tone which either allows or inhibits development of the human and academic potential in a tutoring relationship. This judgment, in fact, received unwitting reinforcement at Cobbleston, when Marjorie Miles, who had been the supervisor from the program's inception, went on maternity leave and was replaced. The effects of that change will be the subject of a later chapter. The purpose here is to give a profile-in-action of Marjorie Miles. The presentation of the supervisor at this point, before the kids themselves have been described, should not be construed to mean that she is more important than they; the program exists for them, and no one believes that more strongly than Marjorie. But it is intended to underline the fact that most of what occurred among and between the kids happened because she allowed it, encouraged it, and supported it.

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* Maurice Gibbons, Individualized Instruction: A Descriptive Analysis, New York: Teachers College Press, 1971, p. 20-21 (emphasis added).

Relationship with Tutors

Marjorie's role in the initial setting up of the program has been outlined in the first chapter. Recall that she avoided learning about whatever personal, social, or academic problems the tutors might have had which qualified them for the program. She had decided that they would be treated as colleagues (under her leadership, to be sure); and thus their personal life was none of her business. This willingness to start from the assumption that the tutors were responsible and capable defines the climate of trust and respect which Marjorie cultivated and in which the kids thrived. In my notes on my very first visit to her program I find this entry: "Teacher kept insisting she was stuck in adult or 'old maid' teacher ways, and the kids usually were right when they picked her up on it: 'The kids must be given the respect they deserve.'"

To many of the tutors it was an experience unique in their lifetimes - or at least so it seemed, so thirstily did they drink it in. A number of them would come to the program on days they didn't go to the high school. And since the program took up two class periods (including time on the bus) but offered only one class worth of credits, some - three, to be exact - actually gave up their lunch period in order to tutor!

The chief manifestation in practice of this respect was the way Marjorie was careful to keep her distance during actual tutoring time - unless she was specifically called over. She was able to sense that her hovering presence would work to undermine the position of the tutors within their relationship - both in the tutors' own eyes and, perhaps more important, in the tutees'. This is not to say that she wasn't aware of what was going on, as the following note illustrates:

> ...interesting to watch Marjorie watching Cheryl and Sandra, a new pair. Sandra's difficult, and Marjorie's concerned about how they'll work out together. She's at her desk, shuffling papers to look busy, but with her eyes on them, following every move, sidling over discreetly a bit to better overhear... Just as, earlier, she had when Mary chose to tell her about the trouble she'd been in (arrested and suspended from school) by loudly and clearly relating it to the other tutors - even though they're not particularly her friends.

I should make it clear that the "safe distance" which Marjorie maintained was only in effect during actual tutoring. Also, there were certain kids who were more at ease with an extra person on hand, and these Marjorie approached more readily. During the half-hour or so just after the older kids arrived and before the tutees showed up, there was ample time for interaction between Marjorie and the tutors. She would use this time to make announcements, to offer suggestions to those who asked, and occasionally to approach kids who didn't ask for advice or for information.

During these exchanges, Marjorie never missed an opportunity to heap lavish praise and encouragement on the tutors. "I just want you to know that I think you're doing a fantastic job with that child - why you've brought him/her out in ways I couldn't have dreamed of," and the like. This was her style: constant application of positive verbal reinforcement, whether dealing with tutors or with tutees. If she was asked for help she was always ready to make suggestions. The following exchange typifies her chosen role as a resource person for the tutors:

Tutor: Can we use the typewriter today?
Marjorie: Sure.
Tutor: Okay; and we were thinking we'd like to do some sort of Easter project or something, but we wanted to check with you to see if it was all right.
Marjorie: Oh sure, you can do anything you want. That sounds like a good idea. I have some materials you might use for that. But let me know when you decide what you want to do in case I can help you get stuff you might need.

On occasion, Marjorie would feel the need to address the tutors as a group - but not often; she was much more likely to communicate on an individual basis. The following is an example of one of her "little sermons" to the tutors:

> I just wanted to say: It's fine to do these short projects where you work on something with your tutee. But let's not lose sight of what you're here for, which is to teach language arts. So do your projects - I'm not criticizing that at all, in fact I believe in not tying yourself down to anything but lessons, I think that's good. But try to relate what you're doing to some kind of language or reading experience.

There were other means of communication as well. Each tutor was responsible for maintaining a binder containing daily plans and records, and samples of the tutee's work. The plans and records were kept on a form which Marjorie had prepared in advance of the program. One side of this form called for information on the activity planned for the day, the other for an ex post facto evaluation - including observations on the tutee's attitude, comments on how the lesson could have been better, and so forth. Marjorie read these plans periodically, and each time she did she wrote a little note to the tutor, usually consisting of some personalized words of praise and appreciation for the "outstanding job you're doing." One day Marjorie told me

> You know, I hadn't checked their plan books for a while, I haven't been nagging, "Be sure to get your plans done" every day - (that was the pledge we made at the beginning). So today I picked them up to see how much they'd slacked off - and you know not one had slacked off; they've all kept up. I was so pleased...

Mid-way through the semester, in another supportive gesture, Marjorie wrote and had typed and mailed a letter to each tutor's parents. Each letter was different, and amounted to an official commendation for the fine work the tutor was doing. The parents were impressed and the kids, needless to say, were proud and even moved.

A rather long note I wrote to myself in March may serve to further illuminate Marjorie's relationship to the tutors:

> I've noted the deferential attitude the high school kids adopt toward Marjorie. Their relationship is not as colleagues, nor do they treat each other as friends. Instead, Marjorie remains very much the "teacher", and the tutors defer to her: they call her Mrs. Miles, which she's now sorry about.
>
> Marjorie has never taught high school - only elementary. She began the year quite anxious about how she'd relate to the high school kids. That was when she told them they should call her Mrs. Miles. Now she's less uptight, and next year she says she'll introduce herself

> as Marjorie. But it's obvious she uses the tactics of an elementary teacher in dealing with the tutors. The idea of praise, praise, praise - constant reinforcement for any little act - is a style which is ingrained into all elementary teachers as part of their training.* It's a style, however, which contrasts markedly with that of the high school students, who understate everything, who cultivate being cool and blase, not reacting overtly to anything. The discrepancy of styles seems to establish a wall across which the two parties communicate, each from their own side. Marjorie overstates everything - she is mercurial, overtly and intensely involved with every personality in the program. Fortunately, her instincts for dealing sensitively with people (apart from the trained-in praise-mongering) are always in play, so she knows that the tutors need as little of her presence - or of anybody else's, for that matter - as possible.
>
> It's very important to these kids - I can think of no exceptions - to be able to work in private. Social pressures to be cool are so high, one would surmise, that they are terrified of being seen doing something out of the ordinary, where they'd be the objects of attention. It's this need that Marjorie respects - in spades! They're so shy about receiving praise. When she sent those letters home, the kids came in the next session, and when they saw an opening - i.e. when they caught Marjorie alone - they came up, eyes cast down, and mumbled a thanks. They really meant it, and they were obviously thrilled to have the letters, but they wouldn't dream of betraying any enthusiasm. One tutor - the best teacher of them all - couldn't even face her: he thanked her by writing a little note in his plans, which he knew eventually she'd read.

The effect on the tutors of the environment created by Marjorie Miles is the subject of a large portion of this report. In the following chapter, some of the personalities and relationships which were able to bloom in it are described in detail. For the time being, two separate notebook entries will illustrate the comparative special quality of this atmosphere for the tutors:

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* I once broached this point with Marjorie. She denied that it was trained in, insisting instead that it was more a matter of "the way I am."

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> Marjorie: I went to the guidance counselor at the high school to talk about the kids. Ruth* and I were just laughing at the end, because he wasn't talking about the same kids. I mean, you wouldn't believe some of the things we heard. How can they be so different when they're there? They just don't know the kids at all.

One day Ruth got a glimpse of what "they" were talking about. From my notes:

> Wayne (a Black, 14 year-old tutor) is so outgoing and pleasant here - joking, well-liked, completely at ease. The other day he needed a bandaid for a split lip. Ruth went with him to the office, and she said he was simply transformed there - mumbling, defensive, on edge - "You know, just a dumb kid. It was incredible."

Relationship with Tutees and Their Teachers

Although Marjorie was acquainted with the majority of the tutees, and was always warm and friendly to them, she was generally careful to let the tutors be the ones to interact with them. One thing she did not want was a situation in which a tutee would come to her for something rather than his or her tutor. This did not mean, of course, that she wasn't involved indirectly with the tutees.

For one thing, she made it a point to meet once or twice a month with each tutee's teacher. The conferences lasted ten to fifteen minutes, and were then recorded in Marjorie's record book. Their purpose was twofold: they served as a way for Marjorie to keep track of the tutee's progress outside the program, and, perhaps more importantly, they were a public relations device. For if there had been some minor problems in securing cooperation at the high school, lack of support at the elementary school had more serious implications. One tutee, for example, whose teacher obviously didn't appreciate the value of YTY, found herself marked down in French, which was taught while the child (a third grader) was being tutored! After that incident, Marjorie arranged for tutees to have a grade for YTY on their report card. Here is an excerpt from notes taken on a day I'd sat in on some conferences between Marjorie and teachers of tutees:

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* the aide

> Marjorie goes to some lengths to assure the support of the teachers who send kids to YTY. She keeps them informed of the tutee's progress, and tries to tie in YTY work with the tutee's classroom work, if the teacher so requests. "They have to know what we're doing so that they'll support us. So when an incident occurs like the one where Tony went down to chew out his tutee's teacher and she starts to spread the word, other teachers will say, 'Oh, really? That's funny, because we've heard really good things about it,' etc., and the incident never amounts to anything."
>
> Also, Marjorie encourages the tutors to meet with their tutees' teachers. Then she has the tutor relate what was discussed, and she makes an entry in the tutee's record - the tutor watches her and sees what she writes: "That way they see how a record is kept; and also, their conference with the teacher is legitimized."

In addition to meeting with the teachers, Marjorie sits in from time to time in the tutees' classrooms. She feels this helps her understand them better, so that she is more informed in advising the tutors who ask for help.

Chapter VI: Some Exemplary Pairs

Doug and Tyrone

Doug is a quiet, serious, well-built high school junior who wears his blond hair long and runs with a rough crowd. He lives with his mother and two older sisters; his parents are recently divorced. Since childhood Doug has been in the shadow of his sisters, both of whom were outstanding student leaders and performers at the high school before him. He has been made painfully aware of his comparative "shortcomings," not least of all by his father, who makes his disappointment with Doug clear: he has set aside money for his daughters to attend college, but nothing for Doug, who offends him by the way he looks and by the fact that he's not "college material." Doug's passion is working on cars, and his association with vocational programs at the high school probably has influenced his choice of friends, which include quite a few drop-outs. Little wonder, perhaps, that his guidance counselor, who knows him well, describes Doug as "turned off by school," that his attendance is poor, or that he "takes only easy subjects" at the high school. "He has an image here at the high school - one of not caring - which he tries to maintain, but which isn't natural to him," says his counselor. For what it's worth, he measured 123 on an IQ test taken in second grade; on the test he took as a sophomore, he scored 101.

Tyrone is in third grade but he is known by everyone at Kurtz. Small but strong, with bright, penetrating eyes set in a strikingly handsome dark face, he may be, pound for pound, the worst troublemaker in the school. Tyrone brings a lot of problems to school with him: no father in the home, mother on welfare, and nine other kids - all girls but one - to compete for attention with. He is the bane of his teachers, and his reading teacher has admitted sending him early to his tutoring session just to "get rid of him." He seems to spend half his time sitting in the office - unless he can duck out and "roam the halls."

Tyrone even had bad luck when he first joined YTY, at the beginning of the program. His first tutor had to leave when she got appendicitis, and the second was on the brink of dropping out of the high school, which he finally did. Doug joined the program in January, and Tyrone was his first tutee.

Given his head as to how he might approach his relationship with Tyrone, Doug chose to become a big brother to him, rather than merely a teacher. For their first real project together, after a period of getting acquainted, Doug bought him a model car. It was his own idea and his own money.

> First I read the directions to him, and put it together while he watched. Then I took it apart again and said, "Now you do it." So he had to read the directions to me first, which I helped him with, and then he followed them and put it together all by himself. It was the best thing we ever did together.

To Doug, the most important thing he could do for Tyrone was to help give him a sense of responsibility. One day Tyrone asked Doug to take him to a puppet show at the school. On the way, Tyrone took his pencil and wrote big loops and lines on the corridor wall as he walked along. Doug stopped and said, "Now use the other end and do the same thing. Until it's all erased, no puppet show." Needless to say, Tyrone complied immediately.

This is how Doug described their relationship in early March:

> Sometimes he doesn't want to work. I can really understand that. I take days off myself sometimes. My old lady understands. She's going to college - studying psychology and juvenile delinquency. I

just ask her to write me a note and she does. So when Tyrone is in one of his moods, maybe I'll just walk with him or go outside. He wants to be a football player, so we'll go out and play football. I hear he's got all sisters at home and no father. And his teacher's a lady too, so he's got some problems.

He's supposed to come here at ten, so when he's not here at five of ten I'll walk toward his classroom the shortest way and his teacher says he left five or ten minutes ago - and when I get back here he's usually sitting here waiting. He must hide in the bathroom and watch me go by the door, then jump out so he can run in the halls some more. Sometimes I'll be waiting here and I'll see his head at the door, but he turns and runs away. So I go after him, which is probably what he wants. Only he knows I'll never run after him, I'll just walk and take my time. Once Mrs. Miles caught him in the hall and just lit into him. She told me I can't let him get away with acting like that. But it seems to me that she treats him the way she says she wouldn't ever treat us, so I don't think I should treat *him* that way. She disagrees with me on this but I just told her to leave Tyrone alone and let me handle him. I really think she's wrong about him. So she lets me do what I think is right.

Interview with Doug

Q: What's your job as a tutor; what's the most important thing you do?
A: Teach him responsibility.
Q: How do you go about that?
A: His problem is transferred into English and reading and skills like that. See, if he had responsibility he'd have learned it. But he didn't, so he needs the responsibility now. I give him some play and some work, about a third play and two-thirds work. He knows if he gets something done and it's *right*, he can go out. Otherwise he can't.
Q: Can you give me a specific example?
A: Well, like when we do cursive writing, I try to get him interested. I've never seen him really want to work, but once he gets started, he'll want to keep going, he won't want to stop.
Q: What kind of help does Tyrone need most?
A: Spelling.
Q: How do you know?

A: When he's reading to me, he'll pronounce words that aren't there; he'll just say the first word that comes into his head. He thinks I'll just correct him and he won't have to do the work. He does the same thing with spelling words.

Q: Do you ever talk to Tyrone's teacher?

A: Yes, Mrs. Hinkle. I see her about once every two weeks.

Q: What do you talk about?

A: She tells me what Tyrone has been doing in class. Then she asks, "Have you worked with him on his writing? on his spelling?" and like that. I tell her, "Of course, that's my job." It's very boring. I feel like I'm doing the work, I know what I'm doing, but she butts in. I try to stay away from her but she comes to ask *me* questions about him.

Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?

A: Yes, in my head. I can't see booking myself up three weeks ahead, though, like some people. That's too much pressure. I usually plan the day before.

Q: Do you think you have about the right amount of freedom to decide how and what to tutor?

A: There's probably more than enough freedom. Sometimes I play too much with Tyrone. Someone should set limits on that.

Q: What's the best thing you've done together?

A: He built a model car all by himself... [see above]

Q: What's your worst problem?

A: Understanding him. He's hard to get to know. He's so confused - with the way school operates, with what's expected of him. He does things and doesn't know he did them; he doesn't know why it's wrong.

Q: What can be done about this?

A: I wish I knew. If I did I guess it wouldn't be a problem.

Q: How do you feel about the day-off Tyrone has on Mondays?

A: I think a kid should have a day off, even away from me. Every day he gets teachers pounding away at him. I pressure him too. He went three days of cursive writing with me and he was *suffering*. We both needed that Monday off. Sometimes he gets on my nerves - then I don't come. If I'm on edge or something, I don't come in. But I wouldn't trade him for anybody else. He's like part of me; I'm like a big brother to him. He needs a lot of help.

Q: Do you think he's happy in the program? How do you know?

A: Half and half. He's moody; it depends on the day. Overall, he's happy in the program: he comes. I know Tyrone, if he wasn't happy he wouldn't come. At first he wouldn't come, he'd roam the halls. Now he's here at ten every day.

He wasn't here today. I'm sure that means he was absent.

Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen in him?

A: In reading, at first he was pronouncing words, sounding them out; now he goes through a book, just reading it.

Q: Do you think his teacher should take credit for that, or do you think you played a part?

A: It's half me, half the teacher. From what I've heard, he doesn't pay attention too much in class.

Q: What do you like most about tutoring?

A: I get to tell other people about him, like my mother, my girlfriend, my friends. I'm learning, too. I'm learning that I missed out on a lot when I was in his grade. Like consonant blends, vowels, prepositions - all these things I should've learned in the little grades when I was messing around. It helps me read better now. It's increased my vocabulary, too.

Q: What do you like least?

A: Having to come here - the pressure. Sometimes things come up and I can't come - like when I have to fix my mother's car or set up an assembly at the high school.

Q: Have you noticed any change in your grades since you've been in YTY?

A: No, not grades, but I love to read now. Like I couldn't stand mythology in eighth grade; now I love it; they're really great stories...

Q: How about your attendance at school?

A: That's dropping. But not because of YTY*

Q: And your ideas about work?

A: Well, I don't hate working anymore, but that's because of my job last summer, not YTY.

Q: You've already told me you'll be working next year and won't have time to be in the program. But would you sign up if that weren't the case?

A: I sure would.

Interview with Tyrone's Teacher

(Tyrone's teacher is a thin, rather nervous woman who has difficulty controlling Tyrone, and may be afraid of him. She had been heard to admit that one day when he got to be too much for her, she sent him early to YTY because "I just wanted to get rid of him.")

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* Doug was one of several tutors who would drive to the program on days they were skipping school. He even came one day when he'd stayed home because he was sick.

Tyrone can't function in a normal classroom. He's constantly acting out, seeking attention.

He especially has problems writing, but he really doesn't work well at much of anything. He needs work on small muscle control, because he has so much trouble writing.

He's unkind to the others in his class. When someone makes a mistake he'll laugh or tease them, or call them a name. And he has a history of stealing supplies - from the gym, for instance - and taking other people's property.

I let Tyrone out at 9:40. He can't tell time, but he knows that when the big hand is on the eight it's time to go. For some time Tyrone would go on his own, but get sidetracked or something and not go directly to Doug. I told Doug I thought he should come to the classroom to pick him up, but Doug didn't want to - he thought Tyrone should have that responsibility. When it got real bad, I got a note from Doug saying he was going to start picking him up. A few days later he sent another saying, "Forget that last note, Tyrone must learn to be able to come here by himself, I won't treat him like a baby."

Doug has asked what kinds of skills I think Tyrone should have. One of the things I told him was to practice writing ovals and slanted lines. I didn't show him, but I think he knew what I meant. I don't really know whether he's worked on it with him or not.

I can't really say for sure that I've seen any changes in Tyrone that I can attribute to the program, but he does seem glad to go each day - although on some days he's not so anxious.

Doug tells me that part of Tyrone's problem is that he wants to be a man before he's ready - that he's rushing things. He really seems to give a lot of thought to Tyrone as a person.

Doug seems very intelligent. I see him about once a week and we chat for a minute or two. He's so serious when he's discussing Tyrone. He really puts his heart and soul into that child. He's extremely sensitive about him. I understand he does badly at the high school, and his attendance is poor, yet he comes to this program regularly. I think he is probably concerned about social

> problems - the establishment and so on - and that his work with Tyrone is related to his social concerns.*

A Crisis

Late in March, Tyrone, who'd been treading thin ice in the school all year, stole some money from the cash register in the cafeteria and was caught. He was suspended.

Marjorie Miles recounts what happened the following day:

> Doug came in and when Tyrone didn't show up he went to get him. His teacher told him Tyrone had been suspended. Doug came back puffing and fuming with rage. He was just beside himself. He wanted to stomp down to the office and demand an accounting, but I told him that although I agreed with him that it was wrong to suspend a third grader (at first I didn't think it was even possible), that he would just lose the whole battle if he went and yelled at the assistant principal like he wanted to. You should have seen him; it was beautiful. He sat on the table and took deep breaths and gave himself a long time to calm down. Then he went down to the office - but she [the assistant principal] wasn't there.
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> He's so great with Tyrone. He was doubly disappointed because he wanted to take him to the zoo on Saturday. Unless we decided that our trip would be to the zoo, then he'd take him to the circus. If we decided on the circus, he'd take him to the zoo...

Interview with the Assistant Principal

(The assistant principal at Kurtz is a young Black woman who seems to have the respect of everyone - kids as well as adults. She's good natured but serious in her work, and obviously cares deeply about the children she deals with. I spoke to her just after Tyrone's suspension, for which she accepted responsibility, and she was still a bit defensive on the subject. After describing his home situation, she turned to his school life.)

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* This teacher was the only person to make this conjecture. Certainly Doug never mentioned "social problems," or evinced any particular awareness of them.

> Tyrone just loves personal attention, and will do anything to get it. He functions well in a one-to-one situation; he responds to it. He did beautifully when we had an aide who was helping certain kids individually. Then, when she wasn't paying him special attention, like when she was on bus duty or working with other kids, he'd call her names, yell obscenities, push people into her, and the like.
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> Once Tyrone was kept on detention by me. His older brother came yelling to get him out, ranting and raving and cursing in the hall. He was going to punch out the principal! Tyrone was watching it all. He copies his brother, unfortunately. He tries to act tough. Lately he stole some money; and he goes around giving the finger to strange teachers. Now, he gets more special attention than any other pupil, but he reached our limit. It was a question of setting limits, which in some circumstances Tyrone can understand.
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> Academically, Tyrone is average or above. He has potential, but only works when he wants. YTY is certainly more positive than negative for him. The mere fact that he goes every day and isn't hostile is an accomplishment. Since the program started he's been in my office less, even though he likes to come, because I'll talk to him. There must be some carry-over from YTY; there's been less playground or hall incidents, and so on.
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> Doug is confused and immature, but I think he's going to find himself in this program. The fact he can get outside himself and be really concerned about someone is very important. I go to Doug for suggestions about Tyrone and he's given me some. He's told me of Tyrone's interest in sports and Muhammed Ali, and collages, and I take them back to the teaching unit as suggestions for teaching Tyrone. Doug wants to push Tyrone academically now, since he's more aware of Tyrone's shortcomings there. He can be an important male image for Tyrone, something he doesn't have now.

Interview with Doug's Mother

> Doug has always been under pressure within the family, what with his two older sisters, who are both high

achievers, and the marital problems between his father and me. His dad never favored him, for some reason, and when he left home Doug went out and stole a minibike. He was thirteen; juvenile court put him on probation.

He was always looking for attention one way or another. In second grade he stole money from me and handed it out to his friends. He was in trouble in seventh grade for shooting off fire crackers on the school bus. He tries to act tough sometimes, but his rough exterior is a defense. He's really very sensitive and compassionate - and always has been.

We talk about Tyrone all the time. Doug bought him a model car in the beginning. I've said to Doug everybody needs a day off, and he's told me he's used the same approach with Tyrone. He really came home mad when Tyrone was suspended. I think he has empathy with him because of his own experience.

YTY has made quite an impression on Doug. He received a commendation from the supervisor in the mail. He just beamed all over. He wants me to frame the letter, and he asked me, "Will you show this to Daddy?" Compared to his father, me, his sisters, Doug gets little satisfaction. That letter, and an award he got in eighth grade for showing the "most growth," are about all he can point to. But this program has been a real success for him, a real source of satisfaction.

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Paula and Richie

It is impossible to predict at the outset what course any particular tutoring relationship will follow. It may be safest to assume that the path will be a rocky one, and will need sensitivity and support if it is to fulfill its potential. This is especially true in a program designed to serve young people with recognized problems of one kind or another. The pairing of Paula, a fourteen-year-old sophomore, with Richie, a sixth-grader, both of them Black, is a case in point. Had Marjorie Miles not been firmly committed from the start to letting the tutors pick their own tutees she never would have put the two of them together. As she put it:

> Richie has just terrible problems. I know because he was in the Title I reading program I worked in last summer. When I found out he was going with Paula I almost cried: her reading level is only about one grade level above his, and I was sure he needed someone who was very sharp.

Then she added:

> But look at them now; they have such a good relationship...

Paula is the youngest of three sisters, and is, compared to them, slow in school. In fact, according to her guidance counselor, she is so constantly reminded, by both parents and sisters, of her relative inferiority, she has come to believe it about herself. She will even say it in so many words: "I'm just slower than the others in school;" and her attitude is reflected in poor grades. She obviously takes great pains to dress well. Her parents both work, he in a factory, she as a maid - but they are still poor; so Paula makes many of her own clothes. This is her first year in Cobbleston. She seems to have adjusted well socially, but, having moved from a big city, she is having trouble adapting to country life: "It's so quiet out here at night I can't never fall asleep." Among her friends, Paula is quiet, but neither aggressive nor out-spoken; she is apparently well-liked by everybody. Her counselor steered her to YTY in an effort to "overcome her lack of confidence," and to combat her underachieving by providing a challenge she could meet.

Richie is a very special case at the elementary school, and has been as long as he's been there. He has never been able to adjust to a classroom situation, and he has a long history of violent behavior when forced to try. His home situation is apparently an unhappy one. His "grandmother," with whom he lives alone, is quite poor. Richie's "bad days" always start before he comes to school, and there is little anyone at the school has found which will offset his mood on those days. Most of his time, in fact, is spent with the school's "crisis teacher," who deals exclusively with kids with severe behavioral problems. His description of Richie is particularly insightful:

> Richie simply can't function in a group. He finds it frustrating and distracting, but especially threatening. He really needs a one to one situation. I've been working with him for three years now so I know him very well. Most of his time in school is spent with me. He only goes to two classes: language arts, where we send him because his reading is good, and science - simply because we have nowhere else to send him during that time.
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> Richie reads, I would say, at grade level. His comprehension is very good, though he's an extremely poor test taker. His skills, however, are very poor - spelling, punctuation, handwriting - he just doesn't even bother. Also, he hates and won't participate in gym.
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> In a classroom, he generally withdraws - he'll go off in a corner to read or cut out pictures. He's not an aggressive person, though sometimes he takes out his frustrations over being in a group with aggressive behavior - fighting or challenging verbally.
>
> But he can be a very hard worker. He does an awful lot on his own. He loves sports, for example

> (though he refuses to take gym), and he's constantly cutting pictures out of sports magazines - especially football. From reading and watching TV he knows every player in the NFL and their numbers. He must have fifty different scrapbooks of football pictures he's cut out, with labels and sentences under them which he's written himself. None of this is connected with school work. I've seen him take Sports Illustrated, read an article, and explain it clearly to a friend.
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> As I say, his comprehension and memory are very good. I can sit and talk to him about history or nearly any subject and he'll listen attentively and retain what I've said.
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> Up in his language art class he was given a part in some dramatic sketches the class was doing. To his teacher's surprise, he read the parts without difficulty and with expression. He expressed amazement that Richie was able to read so well, even though I'd told him so. But I've seen Richie in a class when a teacher has given simple directions and he simply goes blank.
>
> He's now taking math - which he's never been able to do - in an NI (neurologically impaired) class with a specialist and only two or three others. He's doing very well, and everyday he comes back with a couple more pages of problems which he's successfully completed.

Aside from Paula, Richie fortunately found at YTY the understanding he needed, as revealed by these observations of Marjorie Miles:

> You know, we wrote out a grade for him in YTY so he'd have something positive on his report card. Richie is really bright but by now he's coasting on his reputation as a do-nothing good-for-nothing. Everyone assumes he'll fail, and he does - every subject. In last summer's program all the teachers said, "Oh Richie, he can't even read primers!" And yet in our program he was reading fifth grade books, using the enclyclopedia for research projects, and so on like that... Don't get me wrong, I'm not putting down the school, which I think is fine, but Richie just can't function in large groups of people. You just watch him when he gets in a group - like today, even, when he came in the room here and everyone was here. His eyes just glaze over and he gets this desperate look. Ruth [the aide] will tell you what he used to be like. She worked with him in second grade, and he was really uncontrollably wild - throwing furniture at people and all like that.

> Ruth: That's right, I was actually physically afraid of him, he was that bad. He's come so far since then. Of course he's on medication now...

How, then, did Paula make out, faced with a child with problems of such magnitude? Left to define her own approach like each of the other tutors, Paula drew on her own strengths and resources - also like the others. Her even-tempered, quiet manner had a calming effect on Richie, who was as skeptical of this new situation as he was of everything else. For educational content, Paula relied on Marjorie or Ruth to supply her with materials and ideas. But the style was all Paula. She took full advantage of the one-to-one relationship, and greatly personalized all her "lessons:" a typical Paula-Richie session saw the two of them padding out their work-related conversation with pseudo-competitive, good-natured-teasing exchanges. I made some notes on one of these in mid-March:

> Paula and Richie going at it again today. Paula was teasing him about getting married. He turned away and answered with his back turned - so she couldn't see the smile he was struggling to suppress! Finally, Richie dealt a comeback that must have been too good, because they both just cracked up loud. When one of Richie's friends went by the room and called him, he darted out the door. Paula waited a few counts, then went out to retrieve him: "C'mon, Richie, get back in here." And pulled him half way back. Ruth's comment: "They get along so well; it's amazing - they're so ideally matched."

Paula recognized immediately that Richie was bright. She also ascertained that he had a fascination for dinosaurs, so the first real project they did together exploited that interest. They produced - with Richie doing most of the work, so that it was "his" - a diorama, consisting of some little clay models of dinosaurs set in a three-sided open box with prehistoric scenes drawn on it. It was accompanied by a paragraph on dinosaurs which Richie had written after looking them up in the encyclopedia. It was good enough to be put in one of the school's display cases. (This was at the very beginning of the year. In April, I was reading through Richie's folder and came upon a story about dinosaurs he had written at the time. In it he wrote that dinosaurs had died out when it got cold and the world was covered with ice. I asked Paula to ask Richie if he remembered why dinosaurs died out. "Yeah," she said, "I asked him and he knows all about that; he knows a lot about dinosaurs - probably more than me.")

Another of their activities was reading stories, and then having Paula ask him questions about them - which she sometimes had prepared in advance. She probably learned how after they'd worked in the Readers Digest series, which had stories followed by questions. When Richie appeared to be getting restless, Paula, on the advice of Marjorie, decided to start a new project: making a large (foot-high) dinosaur out of papier mache. My notes followed their activity one day:

> Paula and Richie putting together that papier mache dinosaur. They're obviously enjoying themselves. Both are initiating conversation - about home life, this and that. Richie's grandmother just walked in and Marjorie is giving this great pitch: Richie's just a fine boy, very capable, he's working on this dinosaur now, but he's also done some other projects - one of them was selected for the display case upstairs - it's a diorama about dinosaurs and really it's one of the best ones there - I'm sure Richie'd love to take you up and show it to you. (Richie's busy working, straightfaced, through all this, but every once in a while he looks up and flashes this beaming smile!!) Later, when I remark to Paula that it was a good day, she says, "Yeah, really..."

Interview with Paula's Parents

(Paula's parents were both there when I visited their home. At first they were reticent about discussing her, saying that no one had ever explained the program to them, so they didn't know anything about it. As we talked further, however, and after I'd described YTY to them, it became clear that they were very aware of Paula's role in the program and what it meant to her. What follows is a montage of their comments.)

> Paula has great learning ability, but sometimes she does poorly because she gets teachers she feels she can't trust. She talks about Richie a lot. He's terribly bad, but she says she understands him because she's had the same kinds of problems. Now she says he gets teased and she has to cool him down. She wants to do things with him outside of school - she's mentioned teaching him the Bible.
>
> I can see great improvement after she started this. She comes home with work now - books and things - and she'll be studying it. I don't know exactly what it is she's studying - if they're doing good I usually leave them alone - but I know that a lot of the time she's working on stuff for Richie; it's not her own lessons.
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> She feels she has responsibility now, and I know that's important to her. For instance, she won't wear pants to school on tutoring days - says she's a teacher now and has to dress like one.

Interview with Crisis Teacher

(I asked the crisis teacher what he thought Richie had gotten from the program.)

> I can't say Richie's really gotten anything specifically from YTY, other than it's another place where he seems to be able to function, and where he doesn't have to be in a classroom.
>
> At first I was skeptical of the idea - after all, you're taking high school kids who themselves are growing, with all the personal problems that comports, and asking them to relate to younger growing kids who definitely have problems of one kind or another.
>
> I'm not sure how right Paula is. One of her problems is that she takes everything that Richie does or says too personally, not realizing that she's really not such a big influence in Richie's life.

> So on one of his bad days, when he's got something on his mind, and he's not responding to her, she thinks it's her.
>
> Lately, Richie's been getting reluctant to go with her. Apparently he's gotten some teasing from his friends about being with a girl - while each of his friends who are tutees in YTY (Julian and Alvin) have boys helping them. And, Paula's not like a woman, which would be all right - she's a girl. So Richie's gotten teased: "You goin' to see your girlfriend now?" It doesn't have to be repeated teasing either. With Richie's memory, once'd be enough.
>
> So, I think it'd be much better for Richie if he had a boy tutoring him, and I've said so.

Crisis

By the end of March, Richie had begun to balk at meeting with Paula. Apparently, the teasing from his friends was taking its toll. It's possible, too, that Richie's doubts about being with a girl were heard sympathetically and reinforced by the crisis teacher. And finally, matters weren't helped by the project they were working on - the papier mache dinosaur - which was taking longer than anticipated, and in which both Paula and Richie were losing interest. They'd had their tense periods in the past, but Paula's remarkable patience and dogged persistence had always seen them through. The climate by late March may be glimpsed by these notes, taken just before Easter vacation:

> Yesterday, Paula waited patiently in the room, but Richie didn't want to come in. (The day before, she said, he worked very well. They wrote some vocabulary words about dinosaurs, then Richie wrote a story with them to go with the model.)
>
> Ms. Miles and Paula decided that from now on, Paula would wait for him in the library - which she did today and Richie came in. (I mentioned to Marjorie that if he's so uptight about being in a room with people, or about being teased for being seen with a girl, or about needing help, then the public nature of the library, with all its windows on the hall, makes it something

less than ideal. Why not encourage Paula to find a secluded place where the two of them can really work in private?) (Paula told me earlier that every time Richie sees someone looking in at them he says, "Watchoo lookin at! Get outa here or I'll beat you up.")

They began today in the library. Then there was a fire drill, and they went out separately, of course. When they returned, I saw Paula entering the library with her hand on Richie's shoulder - nice warm gesture. Then the two of them disappeared - no one could find them. It turns out they'd gone to a remote study room and talked - mainly about what Richie wanted to do.

Paula: He said, "You always throwin' work at me," and I said, "I don't want to throw work at you, I just want to find out what you want to do and then do that." I think I got some ideas to do something with sports. He's always reading about sports, so I know he likes that...

Interview with Paula

(When school resumed after the Spring break, a new teacher had replaced Marjorie Miles. Under circumstances that will be discussed in another chapter, Paula and Richie were split up. The interview with Paula excerpted here took place just after that.)

Q: Why did you decide to join YTY?
A: I thought I could help kids get some things I never got at that age.
Q: Are you happy with Richie as your tutee?
A: I was, yes. No matter what all happened, I think I taught him something, and it was all right. It was hard to do some things for him - like sports, which he loves - being a girl.
Q: What's your job as a tutor; what's the most important thing you do?
A: Give him a lot of praise, and never put him down. Then, I help him in reading. He's very smart, all his work is good, but it's hard for him to do good in school because he needs special attention. When others come around he can't do his work. I always have to make sure he's paying attention to the work, not something else.

Q: What kind of help does Richie need most?

A: He needs someone who'll listen to him. His attitude could be better too: he needs more respect for teachers, and for me.

Q: Do you ever talk to his teacher?

A: Mr. Huggens [the crisis teacher] comes and explains that Richie's been having problems today, so don't try too much. It happens twice a week - and I only have him four times, so... How do I feel about that? I don't care, so long as Richie gets the help he needs.

Q: What's your worst problem?

A: Getting him to listen.

Q: How could this be solved?

A: Get him a boy for a tutor.

Q: Do you think he's happy in the program?

A: Yes, but he doesn't want anybody to know. He gets teased and everything.

Q: Are you happy in YTY?

A: Yes, I'm happy.

Q: What do you like most about tutoring?

A: I like little children. I like to talk to them and to teach them. After school I work in a day care center. I'm a volunteer.

Q: What do you like least?

A: When the teacher comes around. Richie got sick of the new teacher coming around and saying Paula's doing a great job. It's like I'm hiding behind her, like I need her, or something. It'd be better if I could do it myself.

Q: What has the program done for you?

A: My attitude is better. I've never been so patient before. And I talk more confidently to grown-ups now. It makes me feel older to talk to them and they're not just telling me what to do. And if you do something wrong, they try to help you and correct you, and not just give you a bad mark.

Q: Since being in YTY, have you noticed any change in your grades?

A: They're going down* - I think too much about tutoring, and all the problems...

Q: How about your attendance?

---

* Paula's first semester grades (her first year in Cobbleston) were F,D,C,D, and A in YTY. In the second semester, her mid-term marks were all C's, with an A in YTY.

A: No change really.*
Q: Do you plan to sign up for next year?
A: Yes.

---

* Paula virtually never missed a day of school or of YTY.

Eleanor and Rose

Eleanor is a quiet, attractive eleventh grader. She is white and middle class, living with her parents, a younger brother and a rival older sister, in a pleasant residential section of Cobbleston. Although part of a socially "in" crowd at the high school, at home she's a real "loner", according to her mother: "I see her at the door in the morning, at the table long enough for her to eat dinner, and that's it. There's almost no communication." An above average student who always had good grades, Eleanor was in some academic trouble last year, finishing with two F's, a D and a C in her major subjects. When she heard about the new tutoring program from a friend, she signed up too.

Rose is a little blond third-grader. When her father left home, he left her mother with six children, spread about a year apart. Although the mother works - as a waitress in the snack bar of the local discount center - they are very poor, and receive government assistance. The children are alternately cared for by their mother and their grandmother - a few weeks of one, a few weeks of the other. In class, Rose is negative, nasty, and disruptive. She and her sister, a fourth-grader, are in the same class, and the same remedial reading group. When not fighting her sister, Rose is stirring things up with her other classmates.

When YTY first began, as Marjorie Miles recalls, Eleanor was herself "all snarly and negative". She didn't seem to trust what was going on, and bad-mouthed whatever anyone suggested.

Marjorie was sure she wouldn't last. Once the tutees were involved, however, and Eleanor picked Rose, she was transformed. She quickly turned into one of the most thoughtful, dependable tutors. Rose, too, was a different person in YTY. She revealed, for example, a beautifully infectious smile, which she flashed regularly at Eleanor as they worked. Together, they were most productive, using their time to full advantage and working very seriously.

Rose's whole remedial class was apparently a behavioral nightmare, and by the end of the first semester, their teacher had had it. The new teacher was both tougher and closer to the kids, and since a number of her pupils were in YTY, she and Marjorie were in frequent contact to talk about their needs. The teacher speaks about Rose:

> I specifically asked that Rose be given extra help in alphabetizing, which we'd done a lot of work on, but which Rose couldn't seem to grasp. Eleanor and Rose took it up and Rose simply learned it. She needs periodic reinforcement or she'll forget, but Eleanor was able to teach her to do something which I'd been unsuccessful at, (possibly because I couldn't offer the individual help).
>
> That was really encouraging, and next I mentioned that Rose's cursive writing was wretched. They've been working on that too, and Rose's shown stunning improvement. If only I hadn't left her work at home I could show you some before and after samples. It's just amazing. Now Rose takes great pride in her cursive writing, and concentrates very hard to do it well. Most of my kids can neither read nor write cursive, so once a week I make them practice by having them copy off the board. Before, Rose would never copy more than two or three letters, then stop. But now she does two or three whole lines, and very painstakingly...

Interview with Eleanor

Probably the best insight into the relationship between Eleanor and Rose is offered by Eleanor herself.

> Q: What's your job as a tutor; what's the most important thing you do?
> A: Giving Rose a friend. She always seems so unhappy. She seems to need to know someone's interested in her.
> Q: How do you go about it?
> A: Just by sitting with her, making like she's really something great and that I really care about her. Mrs. Miles told me about her family and I know the kinds of problems she has.

Q: Do you ever talk to Rose's teacher?

A: I've talked to three of them. The one she had first, all she said was, "I have to get something out of my car, no time to talk to you now." The other one said Rose wasn't getting anything out of the program. Then I talked to the one she has now. We agreed that Rose can be negative - kind of surly - but really sweet when she gets her way. I asked her what we could work on, and she suggested teaching her to tell time. She says she knows Rose really likes coming.

Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?

A: Yes, usually I plan the whole week on Monday.

Q: How do you plan?

A: I write it up on those sheets in her folder. We usually start with cursive writing, then we work with sentences, and then, if there's still time, I have Rose read orally.

Q: How often do you ask for help?

A: About three times a week. I ask if they have anything that goes with what I'm doing; if not I make it myself.

Q: What was the last thing you asked for help on?

A: Anything to do with sentences. She showed me the sentence builders on her desk, showed me the pages I might use, and everything, and I used them.

Q: What does Rose seem to like to do best?

A: Read to me. And she likes to type; and write her own stories and type them.

Q: What do you like to do best with her?

A: I have no real preference. I like to do whatever she wants to do, because then it works best.

Q: What's the best thing you've done together?

A: We made soldiers out of clothespins. She read the directions for painting them and everything, which I wrote out in advance. She loved that.

Q: What's your worst problem?

A: She doesn't like to talk.

Q: How could this be solved?

A: I don't know, I haven't found out all year.

Q: Do you think Rose is happy in the program?

A: I think so, because if she wasn't she wouldn't come. She gets upset if I'm not there.

Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen in her?

A: She's most improved in handwriting. And she reads better now. She seems happier, too, more and more. At first she used to look like she was going to cry. Her attitude is better now. She used to be negative; now she's willing to try new things.

Q: What has the program done for you?

A: I've learned alot of English things - different skills - that I never knew about. We don't get that kind of thing here - no basic English skills. We have "avocations" where we just make something and tell the class about it. Aside from that, it just feels good to be doing something for someone.

Q: Since being in YTY, have you noticed any change in your grades?

A: Well, they've gone up,*but not from this, I don't think.

Q: What about your ideas about work?

A: Before, I thought I wanted to be a teacher. I want it even more now - if I go to college.

Trouble?

Late in April, Eleanor was out sick for a week. On my next visit after her return, a Tuesday, I saw her sitting alone and a bit dejected (it was too early for the tutees to be there). I asked her what was wrong and she told me, "Rose doesn't want to come in any more, so I guess it's over." What happened?

> Well, I was sick all last week and I guess Rose saw what she was missing in her special classes. When I went to get her from her art class she wouldn't come. She said she was having fun and wanted to stay. (The day before, my first day back, I went to get her out of her music class. The teacher came to the door and when I said I wanted to speak to Rose, she slammed it in my face, saying I could see her at the end of the period. I knocked on the door again and said Rose's supposed to be with me this period, I can't wait till the end. She just said Rose couldn't leave till the period was over - and slammed the door again.) My attitude was that I couldn't really force Rose to come if she didn't want to. If she did come because she had to like that I'm sure she wouldn't get much out of it. I did try to get her to come by saying we could work on art, or on anything that interested her. I mentioned a few things that I thought she'd like. But she seemed to want to be with her friends - and I can't blame her for that.

---

*Last year, as mentioned, her major grades were F,F,C,D. This year, mid-way through second semester, they were C,B,B,A.

> Anyway, Rose's teacher was here to speak to the group yesterday, and I hear she said that Rose has really improved as a result of being tutored, so I figure that if some good has come of it then it's served its purpose, and with only a month and a half left in the year if she'd rather be with her friends in her special classes then that's okay with me. She told me that on Thursday, so Friday I didn't come in. Or yesterday either. Today if she doesn't come in I guess I'll go down to her class and ask her again if she'd like to come. But I don't really think she'll want to. I think we're probably finished.

At ten o'clock sharp - Rose popped in all bright-eyed and expectant.

When Eleanor filled in her lesson form that day it read:

> Tutee's attitude: Interested (yes); Tried hard (yes); Friendly (yes); Nervous (no); Playful (no); Did Tutee understand? (yes)
> Comments: Rose had told me last week she didn't want to come any more. Today she showed up and she worked great. She's doing better with sentences.

Carol and Marisa

Carol is from a white working class family. She is a pleasant but very withdrawn girl with long, straight dark hair. Only a junior, she is nearly eighteen - a discrepancy explained, according to her, by the fact that her father made her stay back twice when she was little. Why? "Because he thinks I'm dumb." She was steered to YTY by her guidance counselor because of her failing grades.

Marisa is a fourth grader (a classmate of Rose) whose family moved last year from Puerto Rico. She speaks English very limitedly, and, according to her Spanish tutor - a special service at the school - her Spanish isn't that good either. Thus, Marjorie Miles' remark that Marisa doesn't really have a language. Her English by now may be better than her Spanish, though it's hard to tell because she seldom talks at all. As Marjorie describes her,

> Marisa comes from a large family and she's adjusted poorly here at school. Her main defense is to lapse into tears whenever she feels threatened in any way. I had her in that Title I summer reading program, with two other girls who were nice and proper and bland. No threat, yet Marisa spent most of her time just crying. This year she seems to use it to get away with abusing other kids. She'll willfully do something nasty to another kid, then when confronted with it she'll just sit down and cry for an hour or two.
>
> I've sat in on her class to see how she behaves there. She's very shy and non-gregarious; she'll take her reading book and go sit in a corner, on the floor, facing a wall.
>
> With Carol, she's been the best I've ever seen her. They don't communicate that much - they've been working on that papier-mache lamp that I suggested, hopefully to give them something concrete to talk about. I've encouraged Carol to talk more and try to work with some words related to their project, but with little luck. Actually, that situation may be just what Marisa needs, since the threat level must be very low.

The two girls were so low-key and unobtrusive within the program, it took a special effort just to realize they were there, let alone gather field notes on their relationship. Carol would come in with the other tutors, then sit by herself and read or prepare her lesson while the others socialized. Then Marisa would come in and the two of them would go about their work in their quiet way - with Marisa usually scanning the room, keeping track of the goings-on around her (unless they went off to work alone in the science room) - and then break up and that would be it. It wasn't until Carol and I got together alone for her interview that the relationship opened up and Carol suddenly became a very real, alive person.

Interview with Carol

Q: Why did you decide to join YTY?

A: I was failing - everything. I wanted to drop these two business courses and my guidance counselor told me about the tutoring. My parents were against it at first. They said I couldn't make it, that I was too impatient. That's because my younger sisters and brother drive me crazy.

Q: I know you didn't start at the beginning of the program. How did you get Marisa as your tutee?

A: Mrs. Miles said I had patience, and Marisa was really withdrawn. She said I should try to build a sister relationship with her.

Q: Are you happy with her?

A: She's okay, but sometimes she puts no effort into anything. I try to get her to do something, but she's only sometimes interested. She gets bored very fast.

Q: What's the most important thing you do as a tutor?

A: Get her interested in what she's doing.

Q: How do you go about this?

A: I don't know. Try doing things differently - not like the teachers do. I made a lamp with her, but she finally got bored with it. We tried working with a tape machine...

Q: What kind of help does Marisa need most?

A: She needs confidence.

Q: How do you know?

A: When I ask how she'll do on a spelling test she says she'll fail. She says she doesn't like to learn; I say you have to learn if you're going to pass...

Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?

A: Sometimes, but sometimes I wait to see what kind of mood she's in.

Q: How do you plan?

A: I write in her folder before she comes in. Once I made up twenty flash cards with first grade words on them, then meanings and sentences on the back. I made those up at home.

Q: What's your worst problem?

A: Getting Marisa to pay attention; keep her from being distracted.

Q: How could this be solved?

A: By getting her alone somewhere. The science room is good for that sometimes.

Q: What do you think of the way you spend Mondays? [non-tutoring day, usually spent planning or hearing speakers]

A: I'd like to spend it tutoring: Marisa needs all the help she can get.

Q: Do you think she's happy in the program?

A: She could be. I think she is.

Q: How do you know?

A: She comes every day; if she didn't like it she wouldn't come. Her teacher told me she stays home on Mondays.

Q: Have you seen any improvement in her?

A: Yes, she's talking outwardly, not holding back as much as before. She's getting to know what's expected of her. Like on spelling - she knows I want her to try now, so she does.

Q: Are you happy in YTY?

A: Yeah, very.

Q: What do you like most about tutoring?

A: I just like working with kids.

Q: Least?

A: When she doesn't care what I'm doing. When I don't reach her.

Q: How do your parents feel about your being in YTY?

A: At the beginning, my mom was against it, my father didn't care. Now they just don't care. We don't communicate - ever. I can't wait till I turn eighteen - in a few weeks. I'm going to move out and get my own apartment. I'm going to try to find a job, so I can buy a car...I can't wait to get out of that house.

Q: What has the program done for you?

A: It's helped me open my mind and see the world a little better. I was depressed with everything, failing everything, and all like that. Then I had this girl and I said, Hey, she needs me - and I really felt great.

Q: Since being in YTY, has there been any change in your grades?

A: No, not really.

Q: How about your attendance?

A: If it weren't for Marisa I wouldn't come to school at all.

Q: How about your ideas about work?

A: Yeah. I want to be a teacher or a writer.

Q: Do you think you'll sign up next year?

A: I don't know. I may drop out. I want to get a job, and a car.

Ron and Gary

Ron and Gary are the two who always meet in the far corner of the room, hidden from most angles by a large movable cabinet. Ron is a ruggedly handsome (Black) sophomore who joined YTY after the football season because "I had a free period and it was something to do for five points."

Gary is a little (white) first grader with a debilitating shyness which put him way behind in his classroom. The two of them always seem so busy in their corner, working and chatting and joking - a real team. It's difficult to join them, so one way to find out what they do back there is to ask Ron.

Q: What do you and Gary work on?

A: Mostly reading. At first, he didn't know how to sight read, so we worked a lot on sounding out words, vowels, consonants; then I'd encourage him to read to me.

Q: How did you go about that in the beginning?

A: Well, mostly we did beginning sounds and word families, like I made up cards for oral drill with bat, hat, sat, cat, and like that. Yes, I thought that up myself.

Q: What kind of help does Gary need most?

A: Oral reading. He reads slow, he's scared to pronounce the words. He's shy, and lacks confidence. He shuts up when anyone else comes near, like if he looks up and sees you watching or listening he'll just stop.

Q: Have you ever talked to his teacher?

A: A few times. A few weeks after I had him, I was lost about what to do next (after the word families). So I went on my own to ask his teacher. The last time I saw her, about two weeks ago, she gave me this linguistics kit. She describes his needs...

Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?

A: At first, yes. But sometimes he doesn't want to do it. So now I never know. I always have something to do; I think it up the day before, or in the twenty minutes before he gets here. I try to relate it to what's on his mind when he comes in.

Q: What does Gary seem to like to do best?

> A: Draw racing cars. I use that. When I thought he was getting tired of the reading I let him draw the cars, and we talked about them. Now I use it for encouragement. I tell him, if you read, then you can draw cars. Mostly it works.
>
> Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen?
>
> A: Improvement? There's simple words he knows now. And he remembers words better; he's concentrating more than he used to. He's a little less shy, less nervous; more relaxed.

Even though they don't know specifically what's going on between Ron and Gary, Gary is the envy of the other tutees. Ron is so mature and good-looking, and the two of them seem to have such fun. One day I sat near enough to overhear them for a short time. I pretended to be busy in my notebook - which I was, taking these notes:

> Ron's trying to get Gary to read - always a tough job. According to Ron, he's been reading sight words willingly, but when it comes to actual reading, he balks. Ron picks a page. Gary takes the book and turns to a page he knows. Ron: "No, wait, that's not what we're going to read, you skipped some - here, look back here." - and he turns back to the very front of the book. Gary's obviously trying to get out of it, but he's joking easily (could he so readily do that with a teacher?). Ron's good natured about it. They're both smiling but Ron insists. Gary tries again to read something he's mastered, but Ron has chosen what he's to read. Gary: "I don't want to read that." Ron: "If you don't want to read, why don't you leave?" Gary: "Oooh. Well I don't want to read that." Ron: "That's okay, you can go then." Gary certainly doesn't want to go. He doesn't want to read either. Ron: "Are you gonna read what I say?" More hemming and hawing. Then Gary tries a little. Ron: "No, read the title first. You know what to do." Gary does, starts, reads a few sentences slowly. He's doing okay. He stops again. Again Ron asks if he wants to leave. "Is it time yet?" Ron: "No, not quite, but you can go if you want to. Here, why don't you take the book with you so you can practice - then next time we'll try again." And Ron eases him out. Gary goes reluctantly. Ron's in charge, and they'll be ready to start next time.

84/83

Ellen and Diane

Ellen, a white sophomore girl, was one of those unpredictable quantities among the tutors. She cultivated a kind of negative attitude which she seemed to equate with being cool and tough, and at times it was difficult to tell whether this negativism was indeed put on or perhaps after all innate. In any case, she alternated bewteen being gentle and patient, and being insensitive and abrupt, as the notes below will show.

Late in February, Ellen had been nearly two months with white, sixth grader Robert, one of the most challenging - not to say impossible - of tutees. Negative was too mild a word to describe his attitude; Robert even refused to talk. As Marjorie Miles relates it:

> Robert never talked to anyone but his mother till he was three. Now he's so withdrawn he has no friends at all, he never talks. But Ellen has the patience of Job. I just told her in the beginning that he was shy and she'd have to make an extra effort. Well, I never expected her to do as much as she did.
>
> She tried everything. She'd ask what he wanted to do. Take pictures, he said, so Ellen went and borrowed a Polaroid camera, and I bought some film. One picture and that was it, he'd have no more part of it. Next, he said he wanted a model car like one of the other tutees was making. Ellen paid for it herself, mounted it for him (he wouldn't do it), painted it, went to all kinds of trouble - and Robert wouldn't even touch it. Next, he said "I wanna play in the gym." So we pulled some strings, and Ellen took him. He wouldn't play. This went on for months. I kept encouraging Ellen: "You're doing such a great job, the relationship is really important to him" (that was true: he came every day). Finally, this week, he asked to see a filmstrip. Ellen set it all up for him; he stayed a few minutes, then said, "This is dumb", and walked out. Ellen had had it. I tried to put more pressure on her, like I had before, but this time she wouldn't listen. After all she'd done and been

> through with that child, I didn't have the heart to insist that she go on. So we had to drop Robert. Ellen asked if I was mad, and I told her, "No, I'm not mad, and don't feel guilty. You did your best."

The following week a new tutee was taken on for Ellen. From the notes of that day:

> Ellen's new tutee is Diane, a white third grader who is apparently terribly abused at home. Example: Three weeks ago she had a strep throat and a raging fever, but was sent to school. She was nearly delerious; her teacher noticed right away and sent her to the nurse - who said to her, "We'll call your mother and she'll come take you home." Diane immediately began screaming hysterically, saying, "No, don't call her, she'll just come and beat me for interrupting her day!" Nonsense, said the nurse, and went ahead. Sure enough, the mother came stomping in furious at the child for interrupting her lunch hour. She screamed and cursed at Diane yelling, "You wait till I get you home, I'll show you how to feel better."
>
> So little Diane takes out her frustrations at school. She's mean to other kids, bites - kicks - curses - scratches them, has no friends and is despised by her teacher, to whom she's just a nasty little kid. She was glad to get Diane out of her class for a half hour a day.
>
> Marjorie assigned her to Ellen and hasn't mentioned any specifics about her emotional problems - as is her custom. She's just said that Diane needs a lot of attention and a lot of love.
>
> So they went off to the science room together today. (Ellen doesn't like to work in the same room with others. She prefers privacy, which is just fine for Diane who thus has Ellen all to herself.)
>
> First day. How would it work out? Marjorie and I were going by the science room as they were coming out.
> Diane: Mrs. Miles, can I come here every day???
> Marjorie: Well, that's up to Ellen. Ellen, what do you think?

> Ellen: Oh yeah, sure. (Casually said, but she was obviously very pleased. Ellen always tries to appear tough, but she was touched here enough to blush.)

Three weeks later there was some trouble. As I wrote in my notes:

> Marjorie was still fuming this morning: Ellen's gotten apathetic about Diane, who comes religiously at ten sharp every day. The other day Ellen was "whining" to Marjorie, "I don't want to work with her anymore. I don't know why, I just don't." Then yesterday, Ellen was standing talking to her friends when Diane came in. Eleanor noticed her and said, "Ellen, your tutee's waiting for you." "All right, I'll be there in a minute" - and Ellen went right on gabbing, while Diane stood there fidgeting, visibly uncomfortable. Finally Ellen turned to her: "Oh all right, come on."
>
> The very opposite treatment of what Marjorie had told Ellen Diane needed! Marjorie was fit to be tied. She decided to take Ellen off Diane, give Diane to someone else, and then let Ellen have a good piece of her mind. Marjorie is about to go on leave and doesn't want to leave her replacement with a "kettle of fish." "I figure if I really lace into Ellen now she may straighten out. Then she'll at least hate me and won't take it out on the new person - and I'll be gone."
>
> As things turned out, she spoke gently to Ellen, after she'd calmed down, and Ellen said she'd try to do better.

Four days later:

> Ellen and Diane are working fine together. I guess Marjorie's little pep talk straightened things out - at least for now. Ellen greeted Diane the minute she walked in the door, and she and Suzanne (another tutor) took a group of kids to the science room.

Interview with Ellen

(When reading this interview it should be borne in mind that in spite of the pettiness and negativism that clearly come through, when Ellen is actually tutoring she is gentle and patient and more or less sensitive.

But her meaner thoughts are constantly getting the best of her, displacing the more positive motives she knows she should have.)

Q: Why did you decide to join YTY?
A: Because I couldn't stand gym and I needed the points. Also, I've always wanted to be a teacher; I like working with kids.
Q: You've been with Diane a month now. Are you happy with her?
A: You could say yeah; sorta. She really doesn't need it, the tutoring. Mrs. Miles said she needed a friend.
Q: What's your job as a tutor?
A: Give them a little push if they fall behind, I guess. I don't teach Diane school things, but stuff like telling time. She learned to tell time from me.
Q: What kind of help does Diane need most?
A: She needs someone who cares for her. Her mother sure doesn't. I heard about what she did that day Diane was sick.
Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?
A: I write in the book, yeah; but I never do it. I always help her just by reacting to her. You put something down in the book, then you see she's not ready for that. It's her mood.
Q: Can you get help when you need it?
A: Mrs. Miles talked too much. She gave too much help; you wind up not asking any more. So I ask my sister for help - she's a kindergarten teacher. And that new teacher is unfair. I got a B on my report card, and Wayne got an A. Mary never comes and she gets a C; I come all the time*.
Q: What does Diane seem to like to do best?
A: Anything, really. She likes to read orally. But she never refuses to do anything.
Q: What do you like to do best with her?
A: Teach her things she won't learn in school - like about people. I know she won't get it at home. My attitudes's changed toward her. In the beginning I didn't want to take her to the zoo. Now I know if she doesn't go with us

---

*The YTY grades were given by Marjorie Miles. Anyone with reasonable attendance and evidence of caring - meaning nearly all the tutors - received an A. The lowest possible grade was C. Ellen got the B as a result of the episode with Diane described above - which happened right at the end of a marking period.

she'll *never* go...Well, *actually* I want to go to the zoo because Sharon and Suzanne [her friends] are going.

Q: What's your worst problem with Diane?

A: I really can't get involved with her. I'd rather have a boy, I think...No, I know the real reason: her outward appearance. She's not clean, I mean, she really stinks sometimes.

Q: What do you think of the way you spend Mondays?

A: It's nice to have a day off.

Q: Do you think Diane's happy in the program?

A: Oh, yeah. She always asks if I'm coming and what we're going to do. And if I'm absent, she asks why.

Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen in her?

A: She can tell time now, and her handwriting's better. And in spelling, she doesn't put e's on the end of words anymore (like she used to spell hand: h-a-n-d-e).

Q: Are *you* happy in YTY?

A: I guess so; but I'd drop it if I had something better to do.

Q: What do you like most about tutoring?

A: It's better than most classes where you have to hand in a paper, take tests, and all that. It's easy. Then, in the back of your mind: You know you've helped someone.

Q: How do your parents feel about your being in YTY?

A: I don't know, they're not that aware of it. My mother knows I come here because she drives me on days when I don't go to school.

Q: What has this program done for you?

A: Seeing how kids have changed since I was a little kid. And realizing there are a lot of kids who need help.

Q: Since being in YTY, have you noticed any change in your grades?

A: No.

Q: How about your attendance at school?

A: I'm more apt to skip now. Sometimes I come directly to YTY from home.

Q: Do you plan to sign up for next year?

A: No; I don't know.

Some of the Problems...

Mary and Connie

From a day's notes on Mary and Connie:

> Mary has been a chronic absentee. For two weeks she was absent from both the high school and YTY. When she returned she was suspended another week for truancy! Now she's back.
>
> Marjorie: Mary was never real feminine - she likes to wear beat up jeans and a blue flannel work shirt, and she just doesn't talk or carry herself the way people usually think of girls doing. You know, she talks tough, and - well, put it this way, you'll never see her in any lace or frills or anything.
>
> Connie, her tutee, is this little blonde Appalachian doll - tiny, scrawny, in a gingham jumper with bric-a-brac and a puff sleeve blouse, glasses, a shy look. She's very shy, and has problems at home - where she lives with her father and a passle of brothers and sisters. Her relationship to Mary was a godsend to her - she really became attached to Mary, who in turn was very gentle and even became, yes, motherly with Connie. During the three weeks Mary was out, Connie kept coming every day, hoping she'd be there. Marjorie assigned Ellen to work with her temporarily, since Ellen had given up on her own tutee. Connie went along, but obviously her heart was with Mary.
>
> (Marjorie: One day Suzanne wore a blue flannel shirt like Mary's - they look alike from the back. Connie came running all excited up to Suzanne's back, and tugged at her sleeve. Suzanne turned around and Connie's face fell ten feet. I almost cried, it was so sad.)
>
> So today, when Mary showed up we were waiting to see Connie's reaction to her return. When she came into the room, she dutifully accompanied Mary to a desk to work, with no apparent reaction. Marjorie couldn't take it. She went over to Connie and said, "Aren't you glad to see Mary back?" Connie blinked and looked in surprise at Mary. She'd thought it was Ellen! She jumped from

> her seat, walked behind Mary, wound her skinny arms around her neck, and held on, resting her head on Mary's shoulder. Connie was smiling shyly. A few minutes later I checked them out again. Mary had put her head on Connie's desk and was looking up into her face playfully and warmly. Their rapport is a thing of beauty.

Unfortunately for Connie, Mary's outside life - she was engaged and didn't plan to stay in school - continued to take precedence over both school and YTY, and scenes such as this, for all their beauty, continued to be a rarity.

Meanwhile, little Connie kept coming every day to YTY. In cases of unattached tutees it was not unusual for an unattached tutor to fill in. A few days after the incident related above,

> Connie came in but Mary didn't. I think Marjorie was hoping Ellen would pick her up, so she told her to have a seat and someone would be with her soon. But she got involved in other things and left for the library. Suzanne, whose tutee didn't show up today, then moved over and "picked up" Connie - she talked with her, got her some crayons and colored paper and spent the period with her. Toward the end, Marjorie noticed they were working together and came over to thank Suzanne.

Tony and Alvin

Tony, a big, clumsy (white) eleventh grader, was sent to YTY almost as a last resort by his guidance counselor. He was in deep trouble academically, and seemed devoid of motivation. The program didn't seem to make much of a difference in him over the long run, but it did make a few promising dents along the way. It was Tony who became infuriated with the way Alvin, his Black tutee, was being "messed over" by the school, and took it upon himself to tell off Alvin's teacher and attend a Board of Education meeting. Unfortunately, his concern was quickly dissipated by the challenge of reaching

Alvin, a sixth grader with severe reading and (thus?) behavioral problems. Tony's attitude was bad enough that Marjorie was on the verge of dropping him on a number of occasions. But each time, his guidance counselor prevailed upon her to keep him, saying that Tony had never stayed with anything as long as he had with YTY (though his attendance was never good*), and that it was really important for him to have a success experience.

One day, Tony and Doug and I were sitting around rapping before the tutees came in. Tony repeated his usual complaint: "I'm bored." He and Alvin had spent the last few days on a "project" which Marjorie had dreamed up: printing simple words on flash cards, then tracing over them with glue so that the letters were raised; these were supposedly for the future use of beginning readers.

Me: Why're you bored, Tony?
Tony: We keep going over the same words and it's so boring. He's really slow.
Me: Does he seem to be picking them up?
Tony: Yeah I guess so.** But he doesn't really like it and I'm bored.
Me: How do you go over them?
Tony: The way Mrs. Miles told me: I lie to him and tell him we're making games for the little kids...Maybe it's true, I don't know. So we cut out cards, we write the words on them, and he goes over them with glue - so that the kids can touch the words at the same time they see them and hear them and say them. [to Doug] But I'm just tired.

---

* It might have been much worse were it not for his close friend, Doug, who, on days when Tony was absent from school, called him at home from the guidance counselor's phone: "Come on, Tony, get up. Even if you don't come to school, at least go to tutoring. Will you meet me there?" Sometimes it worked.

** Marjorie, who had observed Alvin in his class, discovered that Alvin knew many words with Tony that he didn't "know" with his teacher.

He's just dumb and I can't help him. I'm just waiting to get my five credits. I can't see doing any job without getting paid.

Doug: (feigning sarcasm, but he means it) Don't you think there are things worth doing without getting paid?

Tony: Naw...I just don't like to come here.

When Tony's motivation flagged like this, Marjorie would sit him down for a pep talk. Here, after Tony had said he wanted a new tutee (Alvin was his third), she lays it on thick:

> Now Alvin needs help. We don't expect miracles, but you can help. Alvin does come every day - why do you think that is? And when he acts up he's just trying to impress you; you can understand that, can't you? Look, Tony, you're big and masculine - someone Alvin can look up to. He knows you don't do this because you have to, but because you want to - and that's terribly meaningful to Alvin, when he can see that someone as big and sharp and masculine as yourself will take time out to give to him. You know, there are three people in this school that think Alvin is worth something, and that's me and Ruth* and Jerry**. Now what're you going to do, join the multitude, go along with the crowd, or are you going to be different and realize that Alvin is a worthwhile person who just needs a lot of help and attention. You can give up on him, that's up to you, but you just have to decide, because as it is you're defeating yourself by not trying and following through with Alvin. I can't and won't give you another tutee.
>
> Tony: Can I still work with Alvin?

And Tony would be all fired up again - for the rest of that day and maybe into the next. Then the cycle would start again.

Cheryl and Sandra

Cheryl is a gregarious, very talkative Black twelfth grader. She probably talks much faster than she thinks.* Sandra is a very bright, blonde, blue-eyed little second grader with terrible social problems. As Marjorie described her, "She doesn't relate to anyone. I knew her in first grade. She used to literally fly around the room. No one could control her. She's known to have this evil streak, too - calling people names, spitting on them, punching them - the whole route." Sandra's problems will not be readily solved: as young as she is, she has already undergone three operations on her brain.

---

* the aide

** the crisis teacher

On their first day together, Marjorie was curious, not to say a bit apprehensive, about how they'd work out together. Cheryl had been told only that Sandra needed a lot of personal attention. Cheryl turned out to be a very gentle and understanding tutor; some of her approach comes through in these interview responses:

> Q: What's your job as a tutor; what's the most important thing you do?
> A: Give the tutee something to remember, so she doesn't feel she's wasting her time. It may not be any help in the future, but as long as it relieves any feeling of fear about life or like that then it's good. I try to give her enough so she can understand herself. It's not the problem that's important, but to know you can solve it.
> Q: How do you go about that?
> A: Accept the tutee as she is. For instance when she says, What do you want? nasty, I just say, Well that's how she is. I put all that out of my mind and don't let it be a factor.

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* On her interview, in answer to the question "Why did you decide to join YTY?" she replied, "To have someone to talk to - otherwise I would've had a study hall. Also, to help somebody."

Q: What kinds of things have you done together?
A: The first thing we did was we made a collage together, based on one I'd done on Black Voices. Then the best thing was when we wrote a letter to her first grade teacher. She'd moved to Pennsylvania and she wrote Sandra back and she was just thrilled.

Sandra responded to Cheryl by being calm and cooperative - while she was with Cheryl. When she wasn't, she was out stirring up trouble.

One of her favorite tricks was to wait in the hall till a strange boy went by. She'd call out an insult, then duck into the sanctuary of the girls room. One day I happened to be walking in the hall when I came upon a teacher trying to quiet down a Black boy who was visibly upset - I mean very upset. The cause: "She told me my mother wore combat boots!" I looked around and sure enough there was Sandra's head at the girls room door.

Eventually this practice of Sandra's proved the downfall of her relationship with Cheryl. Sandra was late for tutoring one day, and Cheryl went looking for her. She found her standing in the girls room door yelling nigger at a Black kid. Then Sandra looked up and saw Cheryl. She ran away and wouldn't come back for days. When she finally did show up, Cheryl had decided to ignore the whole thing and just continue what they'd been doing. But Sandra's guilt was apparently too much for her, and she was never able to work comfortably with Cheryl after that. She began hiding on days Cheryl was there, and coming on days she wasn't. Then Cheryl's attendance began slackening, and despite efforts to reconcile them, they never really got together again.

...And Some More Successes

Sharon and Timothy

(Sharon, one of the most inventive of the tutors, is in eleventh grade; Timothy is in third. Both are white. From Sharon's interview:)

Q: Do you like having Timothy as a tutee?
A: Yeah. He's just so natural. He's not afraid of me at all - to call me names or anything. He talks to me any way he wants to. He's a little friend.
Q: What's your job as a tutor?
A: Help him with everything. If he isn't fast enough to get it in school, I can help him - even help him like school a little more.
Q: How do you go about it?
A: By trying to make him not think of everything as work. I make a lot of games, like the one with the vowels. I make it fun. Ditto sheets and workbooks and things like that are out - a real drag.
Q: What kind of help does he need most?
A: Self-confidence. At first he'd always talk about his mother, nothing but his mother. He said he only read to his mother; he even offered to bring her in. It was real bad in the beginning. He was close to tears because his mother had a special way. I told Mrs. Miles about it and she couldn't believe it was that bad. Then a few weeks later she was giving him a test and she said all he talked about was me!
Q: What does Timothy seem to like to do be.
A: Make noise...Any kind of game - especially one he can win. He likes to do things better than me. And he likes to write stories and type them; also, write on the blackboard.
Q: What do you like to do with him?
A: Whatever *he* likes to do. If he's enjoying it, so am I.
Q: What's the best thing you've done together?
A: One day he taught me all about baseball. I was asking him questions about it. He felt real good because he was ahead of me.
Q: What's your worst problem?
A: Getting him to settle down. He's very overactive, even in the YTY room. He gets distracted easily - sometimes he just walks off in the middle of something. I don't think anything can be done about it, really; he's just that way. If we were alone somewhere he probably wouldn't come. I suppose he'll grow out of it...

Q: Do you think he's happy in the program?
A: He acts like he is. When he's not he tells me. He is really open now. He wouldn't come if he didn't like it.
Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen?
A: He never talks about his mother any more. I never thought I'd see the day. He's got a lot more self-confidence.
Q: What has the program done for you?
A: I know what teachers go through now - how they feel when something's gone wrong.
Q: Since you've been in YTY, have you noticed any change in your grades?
A: No.
Q: In your attendance at school?
A: No, they're not related.
Q: How about your ideas about work?
A: Yes: I really want to be a teacher now.
Q: Do you plan to sign up for next year?
A: I can't. I have too many subjects I have to take. I already miss lunch to come here now. But I would if I could!

Wayne and Julian

(Wayne, one of those who misses lunch in order to tutor, is an underachieving sophomore at the high school. Julian is a sixth grader with social problems. Both are Black. Julian feels "crowded" in a class situation and responds poorly - sometimes violently - to his teachers' disciplinary efforts, especially on certain days when he comes to school in one of his "moods." He usually spends these days with the crisis teacher, and is consequently way behind in his work. Soon after he began working with Julian, Wayne noticed that his tutee seemed to have difficulty seeing the words he was trying to read. He recommended an eye test, and weeks later it was confirmed that Julian needed glasses. In these excerpts from his interview, Wayne describes their relationship.)

Q: What's your job as a tutor?
A: Help him with reading problems and vocabulary. In his class it's boring, but the program is better;

there's no teacher, not so much discipline.

Q: How do you go about it?

A: We read stories, then ask questions at the end. We use the Readers Digest series, or sometimes another series that Mrs. Miles showed me. Last week I planned to work on sentence structures. I'd have him construct a proper sentence out of cards from this kit.

Q: What kind of help does he need most?

A: He lives near me, and I know if he had a big brother he'd be better off. I'm the same way. I used to get beat up because I had nobody to take up for me. Julian's the same way - he gets in trouble in his neighborhood. I told him we're brothers, and if anybody messes with him he should tell me, I'd take care of it. One day I saw this eighth grade dude push Julian. Julian said quit it, then the dude grabbed him and smacked him. He did it again and I told him to lay off him. Julian was hot, he was gonna hit him with a cup and saucer. Then the dude left and I went down with Julian to report it at the office. After that, the last time I asked him, Julian said everything was all right, he wasn't worried any more.

Q: Do you ever talk to his teacher?

A: Yes. One time I went down to see his reading teacher, because Julian was bringing in these worksheets he wanted help on, and I wanted to find out about them. She said he's behind in his work.

Q: What does Julian seem to like to do best?

A: Ride his minibike. Here, he likes to type. We learn his vocabulary words: he says them then he types them. Sometimes he wants to play basketball. I just tell him that's not what he comes for. Sometimes when he has a bad attitude we go off and just talk.

Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen in him?

A: He's coming along in his reading. Then, his attitude was funny - he didn't like his classes or his teachers. Now he says he likes it better than before. Yes, I think I'm responsible.

Q: What has the program done for you?

A: I feel like I'm helping someone - it makes me feel good.

Q: Have you noticed any change in your grades?

A: No.

Q: Your attendance at school?

A: No.

Q: How about your ideas about work?

A: I like to work with kids - more and more.

Q: Do you plan to sign up for next year?

A: I already have.

Wanda and Robert

(Wanda is a pretty, Black high school junior. Her family is poor, and after much bad feeling between her and her parents, she got married during the year. Her husband promptly left for basic training in Texas, and Wanda moved in with his parents. Robert is tall, though only a second grader, and blond. He is very quiet and withdraws into himself when he's in his classroom. It's hard to know whether he's behind because he withdraws or he withdraws because he's behind. For tutoring, he and Wanda always go off somewhere alone - the library, an empty room, or the like - where they talk and Robert mainly writes stories. His stories are always interesting and highly imaginative. He may have a quiet exterior, but inside there's a very fertile mind brewing. From Wanda's interview:)

Q: What's your job as a tutor?
A: To teach him how to read.
Q: How do you go about it?
A: Every day we'~~ll~~ talk about something he did over the weekend or last night, and his family, etc. Then I get a book that'll tell about other boys like him. If he doesn't know a word I write it down and he takes it home and studies it, with his mother. He looks at the pictures for clues to meanings. He sounds out words pretty well now.
Q: What kinds of help does he need most?
A: Sounding out words.
Q: How do you know?
A: It's obvious.
Q: Do you ever talk to his teacher?
A: His homeroom teacher.
Q: How often?
A: One day I went to her and explained who I was, asked what I could do to help. She didn't say anything.
Q: When was the last time?
A: A lo-o-ong time ago.
Q: Do you plan your tutoring session ahead of time?
A: Yes, but first I try to find out how he feels

that day. If he doesn't get something the first time, I do it over in a different way. I always know what to do for the following day.

Q: What does Robert seem to like to do best?

A: His favorite thing is parachutes and airplanes. He wrote three stories about them. I told him to cut any picture out of a book he liked, and said maybe we'll write a story about it afterwards.

Q: What do you like to do best with your tutee?

A: It's hard to say: He likes everything I do, I like everything I do with him.

Q: What's the best thing you've done together?

A: After I got married, when I came back, he asked me a whole bunch of questions; we talked about that.

Q: What's your worst problem?

A: Don't have any - though sometimes he doesn't seem interested.

Q: What do you do about that?

A: I ask the supervisor for help. Or I'll say I'm not gonna come any more. He says "Don't say that, I want you to come and teach me." He gets scared.

Q: Do you think Robert is happy in the program?

A: Yup.

Q: How do you know?

A: It's obvious.

Q: What kinds of improvement have you seen in him?

A: He sounds out words better. He reads faster. He's not as lazy as he was.

Q: Are you happy in YTY?

A: Yup.

Q: What do you like most about tutoring?

A: I like to work with kids. I wish I had something like that when I was a kid.

Q: What do you like least?

A: When the tutee's not there. He gets sick, so he can't help it.

Q: How do your parents feel about your being in YTY?

A: We don't get along. I worked on vowels at home for Robert and I explained it all to my husband.

Q: What has the program done for you?

A: I learned how a kid reacts to learning. It'll help when I have my own kids. I didn't care about school - I used to just come to school to go to YTY. I get in a lot of fights here. At YTY I can just do my own thing.

Q: Since being in YTY have you noticed any change in your grades?

A: No. But my report card looks a little better, I fail less.

Q: What about your attendance at school?

A: If I didn't have tutoring, I probably wouldn't come to school that much.

Q: And your ideas about work?

A: It'll help me get a job teaching kids in the summer.

Chapter VII: New Leader: New Program

When I first came to Cobbleston and decided to study it in depth, I was told that the supervising teacher, Marjorie Miles, would be going on maternity leave starting in April. Initially disappointed, I soon realized that such a change might provide a good opportunity to test an old axiom - that the success of a program depends as much on the personality of whoever runs it as it does on the program's design; and perhaps more so, since the right person can make nearly anything work, while even the best-conceived program will not survive inappropriate or incompetent leadership - at least so goes the lore. Of course, it was not assumed Marjorie's replacement would be the "wrong person." But she inevitably would be different in some ways from Marjorie and an examination of the effects of these differences, I thought, could be instructive and revealing.

Precautions had already been taken to insure a smooth transition: fully a month before the change the future supervisor began coming in two or three days a week to see how things were done. Her name was Estelle Fisher, a personable, soft-spoken woman, about thirty-five, who seemed impressed and enthusiastic about the program - the concept, the kids, the role of the supervisor - everything. Years before, she said, she had taught for a year in an elementary school; she'd enjoyed it then and was really looking forward to getting back to it.

Marjorie went to great lengths to make sure Estelle knew the ropes. She described the background of the kids and the program, saw that Estelle was on hand to see how she interacted with the kids, and explained in detail her motives and her approach. Although it was obvious the two of them had different personalities, there was no reason to think that the program couldn't work just as well under a different leadership style - so long as the substance was retained. Several weeks before she took over, Estelle told me she thought she knew the key: "I think it's the enthusiasm of the leader. Her attitude is so positive, she's so helpful and supportive. And the kids really respond to it." So Estelle determined to be positive, an attitude she didn't seem to have to force: she constantly expressed admiration for the ability, the resourcefulness, the dedication of the tutors.

Estelle realized - as did we all - that there would be a delicate transitional period during which she'd have to establish herself with the kids. Accordingly, I was asked to curtail my visits for a couple of weeks - which I gladly did. By the time I returned, Estelle had made her mark, and a transformation of the program was under way.

Perhaps the best way to dramatize the change would be to trace its effects on the kids themselves. Take Paula and Richie, for example. My first day back, I found Paula sitting alone in the library, "where Mrs. Miles told me to wait" - waiting for Richie, who apparently had gotten up and run away.

> Paula: Richie, he don't like that new teacher. We was working fine together, but every time she comes around Richie jumps up and leaves. He says he don't like her. I'm not going to run after him, though. She gave me this Reader's Digest and told me I should do that with him, but I think we should work on, you know, stuff he's having trouble with in his class. But he don't want to do nothin' when that new teacher come around.

Meanwhile, Richie appeared at the door. I was sorry I was still there.

Just then Estelle came in and went over to Richie. She sat him down and had a talk with him some distance away. After a while, Richie went to "get a book" and Estelle came over and suggested I leave Paula with Richie.

> Estelle: I've had a few problems with Richie lately. Each time he sees me he tries to run away. Even when he's with Paula, he won't stay if I come over. I've been trying to build a rapport with him. Today was the first time he sat down and talked with me - usually I'm talking to the back of his head, walking after him. Yesterday they were both in the room, and one of his friends came by and yelled something. Richie got really upset and violent. All the high school kids were watching to see what I'd do - first real test and all that. Well, just then Jerry walked by and I grabbed him and let him handle it.
>
> Marjorie's absence seems to have hit Paula hardest. When she was here, Paula was always quite open and friendly with me. But now she avoids me and seems to almost resent me. You saw how she ducked out before? She goes to wait for the bus at the front door now, instead of here in the room. She really seems to miss Marjorie. But I think we'll straighten things out in time. Paula really felt close to her. She almost had us in tears when Marjorie left - the way she said goodbye. And Paula asked for her address so she can write to her.

A few days later, Paula arrived saying, "I hope Richie's not here today. I'm tired." Later, Estelle came into the room and said, "Paula, Richie's looking for you." "No he ain't either," Paula shot back. "He knows I'm here. I told him to meet me in here. He just runnin' around in there, he say he don't want to come. Well, nobody's forcing him to come." Later, Estelle succeeded in getting them together, and the following dialogue ensued while Estelle stood with them:

> Richie said he didn't want to work with Paula.
> Paula: You said before you wanted to do some stuff you're workin' on in your class. What about that?
> Richie: I don't want to do it with you. I'll just go up and do it myself.

Paula: What if I help you and you get a A. Then you can show it to your mother.
Richie: She don't care what I get, so you might as well forget it.
Paula: Huh, I don't believe that, 'cause I know if you bring home a A she'll be proud, and you'll be glad, too.
Richie: You don't know my mother, and besides, what makes you think I'll get a A just because of you?
Paula: It won't be because of me, it'll be because of you. But I can help you.
Estelle: Here, why don't you get that book that Richie picked out the other day and work on that.
Paula: No, I think Richie and me better talk this whole thing over. We gotta reach a understanding here.

And the rest of the period they talked. Alone.

Paula and Richie's relationship was never an easy one; it was alternately frustrating and rewarding to them both. Yet under difficult circumstances - Richie's aversion to group pressure, his being teased by his friends, lack of full support from the crisis teacher - the relationship endured. Paula persevered, Richie still came every day, there were some concrete products, such as the diorama, and some stories. But the injection of a new personality apparently increased the strain to a point where, less than a week after the above incident, Estelle decided to break them up.

As the passages above show, Estelle, in her eagerness to insure the continued success of the program, violated one of the cardinal rules in Marjorie Miles' unwritten code: she interposed herself between tutor and tutee and thus compromised their relationship. She thought that in order to "establish herself" it was necessary to "build a rapport" between herself and Richie. In doing so, she failed to anticipate the effect this would have on Paula - and on Paula and Richie as a pair.

Estelle's general approach was to spend tutoring periods circulating from one pair to the next, distributing praise wherever she went -

in an effort, no doubt, to imitate Marjorie's positive enthusiasm, which had appeared so important to her. For all her good intentions, however, this was taken by the kids as a form of meddling, and amounted to the same thing as directly interceding with a tutee, as she had with Richie. As Paula put it in her interview:

> Richie got sick of the new teacher coming around and saying Paula's doing a great job. It's like I'm hiding behind her, like I need her or something. It'd be better if I could do it myself.

Not surprisingly, many of the high school kids reacted as Paula did. To them, Estelle was "coming around" not just to tell them what a fine job they were doing - a bit of information they scarcely needed at that stage of the game. This was only a front, they thought, for her real motive, which was to check up on them. In other words, they felt her as a threat to their autonomy.

As things developed, in fact, their instincts were correct. As mentioned, Estelle was very anxious that the program succeed - or perhaps more to the point, that it not fail because of her. In the face of these fears, she was unwilling to risk relying on the unsupervised actions of a bunch of high school kids, and began substituting her own judgment for theirs. Predictably enough, the result was disaster. Here is an illustration.

Suzanne and Iris

Suzanne is a soft-spoken, white twelfth grader with a lot of sense and a lot of compassion. When asked what she liked least about tutoring (she liked "the idea that I'm helping someone" most), she answered:

> Tutoring in this particular program. It can't be changed, but I'd rather help someone who's really in need - a child who's brain injured, retarded, crippled, or something like that. Last year I worked as a volunteer with brain injured children, and eventually I plan to go into Special Ed...

As it was, Suzanne's tutee was certainly in dire need. Iris, a white third grader, had terrible problems at home. As Suzanne tells it,

> She's very poor, she's never clean, and I know there's a lot of child beating in the home. In the beginning, she'd tell me all these horrible stories about her home life. I told Mrs. Miles, and she got me an appointment with the social worker. There was an investigation by the state, and as a result Iris was moved to her gradparents'. She's back with her mother now, but on condition that she be sent to school every day (her mother used to keep her from going because she just wanted her home).

The interview continues:

> Q: What's your job as a tutor?
> A: To go over school work with a closer relationship, with no pressure, like in class. Also, to be there to talk to her when she needs it. I try to stay flexible.
> Q: What kind of help does Iris need most?
> A: At first, someone to talk to. School-wise, she needs discipline in her work habits. She's not stupid at all; just lazy.
> Q: How do you know?
> A: If she doesn't want to work she'll complain of a headache. I believed her at first, but then I found out she just uses it. Her teacher told me she does the same thing in class. But she's stopped doing it with me. You have to be tough with her, I think - not give her too much praise, but tell her it's bad if you know she can do better. If she complains of a headache I say, "Too bad, work anyway." If you really command her, she'll do it.
> Q: What does she seem to like to do best?
> A: Talk to me. Recently she likes writing stories. At first she refused to do it. But I eased her into it, and once she got started, she was writing about herself - then I got started correcting her English, her spelling, etc.
> Q: What do you like to do best with her?
> A: Mainly whatever she likes, because it's easier that way and we both do better.
> Q: Do you ask for help very often?

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> A: Generally, I like to stick to myself. There was the one time when I told Mrs. Miles about Iris' problem and she set up the appointment with the social worker. Mrs. Miles complimented us a lot, but she left us alone. Mrs. Fisher bugs you. First she told Iris that her bad work was good. Another time she said, "If you have a headache, just put your head down, I'm sure Suzanne won't make you work if you have a headache."

A third time, Estelle took exception to the harsh tone Suzanne had used with Iris, and wrote her a note in her plans suggesting Suzanne use more encouragement and praise. The tutors ride the bus together every day, and it wasn't long before Suzanne and Iris became a minor cause célèbre among them. They were incensed that the new teacher would presume to criticize tutoring practices that had been developed over a long period of time - much longer than Estelle had been around - in which both tutor and tutee had achieved a comfortable working relationship, and which was obviously producing success (Iris' teacher affirmed that her attitude had greatly improved since she'd been in YTY). Moreover, they were beginning to accumulate incidents of their own.

The Others

By the third week after Estelle took over, the tutors had got the message: in spite of a lot of rhetorical praise for their ability, they were not to be trusted to make their own decisions and do things their way. When Paula was "relieved" of Richie, for example, she was reassigned - to Alvin, of all people, since Tony didn't seem to be coming in any more* (one would have thought that Paula deserved someone slightly less demanding after her trials with Richie). Just before Alvin came in,

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* As luck would have it, Tony showed up that same day.

Estelle sat down with Paula to explain in very great detail just what she should do with him: Have him read these words, but if he doesn't know one, tell him immediately; don't do this, let him do that, listen for this, help him with that part, etc., etc., etc.

Whether she intended it or not, Estelle very much put herself in the role of teacher, with the kids as just older or younger students. She had decided to use Mondays, when the tutees didn't come, as a rap session. The idea had a great deal of merit, with many potential uses: a forum for exchanging ideas about tutoring, discussing behavior problems and how they were handled, or even a feedback session in which the tutors could let Estelle know she was stepping on their toes. Unfortunately, she used it to lecture the tutors about such things as poor attendance ("The worst offenders I'm sorry to say aren't here today, so maybe you'll carry the message back to them"), or more carefully planned lessons. When the kids were invited to speak, the atmosphere was like a classroom, with the teacher as the center of focus, mediating all discussion. In short order, Monday attendance diminished to just a hardy handful.

As for her everyday conduct, here are some of the tutor's comments:

> Sharon: No, I haven't asked for Mrs. Fisher's help. She just comes around and offers it - 'bout every day. Her manner is wrong somehow. She comes around too much, stands over us. Timothy gets nervous.
>
> Doug: I can't get to know this lady. I just can't talk to her.
>
> Wanda: Mrs. Miles used to get on my nerves with all her praise; but she meant it. Mrs. Fisher seems phony to me.
>
> Larry: I don't like Mrs. Fisher. She lacks the ability to communicate with kids - both tutors and tutees. She sounds like she doesn't know what she's doing. Mrs. Miles understood what we needed better.

> Carol: Mrs. Miles was always there when you needed her. Mrs. Fisher's o.k. but - she doesn't relate well to the tutors. She comes over and looks over my shoulder when I'm trying to talk to Marisa. I know she means well, but...
>
> Wayne: The teacher tries to help, but without knowing the child as well as the tutor they can make it worser than it is, and 'cause the kid acts different with you, and the teacher doesn't know how it is between the two of you, and you usually know the tutee in some ways better than the teacher... Everything's falling apart right now...

Wayne was referring to his relationship with Julian, but he might as well have been describing the whole program - in fact, his own problems were not unrelated to what was wrong overall. Julian had apparently been having some severe difficulties at home, because for over a week he'd been edgy and uncooperative - not just with Wayne but in his class as well. Estelle advised Wayne to be firm with him when he refused to work. She then consulted Jerry, the crisis teacher, and as she tells it,

> He said that Julian needs to be left alone, and that he shouldn't be challenged. He said if you make demands on him, like say "You do that right now!" he won't respond. But I'm not so sure. If you let him get away with too much, he may take advantage...

Estelle certainly was not responsible for Julian's personal problems. Nevertheless, the attitude which she reveals here was symptomatic of the program's growing ills. Once the kids felt a loss of confidence in them on the part of their supervisor, some of them ceased being the exceptional people they had become and reverted to their former selves. Attendance patterns changed. Doug, whose previous record in the program was two days present for each absence, (except for March, when he missed only two days the whole month), was now absent two days for each day present. Another of Marjorie's "stars," Eleanor, showed a similar reversal: formerly one fourth of the days absent, now one fourth present. No fewer than ten tutors, in fact, showed sharp relative drops in attendance after the change in supervisors. Two of those who didn't - Mary and Tony - couldn't have got any worse anyway. The others who kept coming regularly were Paula, Ron, Wayne, Carol, and Ellen. On one of my last visits to the program, at the end of the first week in June, I noted:

> Pretty desultory atmosphere. Granted, it's two weeks from the end of the term, a Friday, and even senior skip day (only two tutors are seniors). Only six have shown up today: Paula, Ron, and Wayne (as always), Doug, Larry, and Ellen.
>
> Paula and Alvin, it seems, have washed out. Alvin was uncontrollable, even in the science room. Paula's approach was to say, "If you don't want to learn, others do." Alvin stopped coming. Paula figures she'll wait out the term without a tutee. But she still comes every day.
>
> Estelle thinks that sixth graders do worst in YTY. "There's a big difference even between fifth and sixth grade kids. The sixth graders are too close to the high school kids, they identify more with them than with the little kids - or they try to. I don't think they like being equated with the real little kids - such as first graders - that come here with them." That seems like a very valid point.
>
> Meanwhile, some rays of light: Richie (who was assigned to work with Ron, part time, after he left Paula), is "transformed." He comes in every day, works his twenty minutes behind the cabinet with Ron, then spends the rest of the hour working quietly by himself - *every day*. Jerry thinks it's because he's not with a girl any more.
>
> Marisa, too, has changed. She's downright eager when she works with Carol. Carol is so excited with Marisa's enthusiasm she hasn't missed a day (until today). She does some work with Marisa - like on spelling - then gives her a test. Marisa has been doing *perfect* work on the tests.
>
> Today, everyone just sitting around (except Wayne, who disappeared with Julian). Ellen's and Larry's tutees the only ones here; nobody seriously doing anything - just jawing and aimless fooling around. Sigh.

The following Thursday, only Cheryl and Carol came, and one tutee, Tyrone. Nothing to report.

Lest the reader get the wrong impression, it should be restated that Estelle Fisher was no ogre. On the contrary, she was a very nice person who steadfastly maintained a positive attitude about the kids and the program, even as it crumbled around her. "All things considered," she'd exclaim, "I'm very happy with the way it's going." She explained the setbacks as a combination of uncontrollable circumstances involving volatile and unpredictable individuals, and an inevitable loss of momentum and enthusiasm among the children as the year wore on. At least these were her outward rationalizations.

What she told herself is another matter. For in spite of her professed admiration for the ability of the tutors, Estelle's behavior betrayed a different attitude. She was constantly "looking over their shoulders," in Carol's phrase. If a problem arose with a tutee, she immediately stepped in to make things right. She went out of her way to make "suggestions" for things and ways to teach, whether her help was solicited or not. All of these actions were taken in the sincere belief that they were to the greater benefit of the kids and the program. But they served to undermine and finally destroy the one element on which the success of the entire program had been based: the tutor's sense of being trusted, of having real-life responsibility.

The temptation an adult feels to substitute his own judgment for a child's is a powerful one. It is even more acutely felt when the adult knows he alone will be held formally and publicly responsible for whatever happens. Few people are willing to accept responsibility for a situation they do not control. To yield authority under such conditions takes a great deal of courage and self-confidence - perhaps an inordinate amount for most of us.

It also takes, perhaps, a certain respect for people who are just people - a faith in their ability to rise to a challenge in a situation of trust and real responsibility. Such a faith, applied specifically to ordinary people who are also adolescents, is at the heart of the YTY concept. When the high school tutors in Cobbleston felt it, their self-esteem soared visibly and suddenly their "potential" had to be redefined. When they lost it they became "ordinary" again.

Thus, the role of the individual who sets the tone of a tutoring program cannot be overemphasized. It is not enough for an older kid and a younger kid to be placed side by side and told to tutor and learn. The tutor must feel he has a personal stake in what happens, that his judgment will be valued, and that his decisions will stick - in short, that he counts in that situation. And then it must really be so, for the kids simply will not be fooled. Paula provided poignant evidence of that fact: As her parents reported, as long as she was tutoring Richie she was careful to wear only skirts and dresses, because "I'm the teacher and teachers don't wear pants." When the new supervisor took over, Paula quickly understood that she was no longer the teacher, but just a dumb kid again. The day she started tutoring Alvin was also the day she began to wear pants.

Chapter VIII: *Conclusion*

Whatever actually happened in this program took place in an atmosphere which by normal school standards was extraordinary. Perhaps the clearest fact to emerge from this study is the extent to which this atmosphere is set by the person of the supervisor much more than the force or the viability - which is considerable - of the principles and concepts of YTY.

It is not the personal *style* of the supervisor which is crucial. Marjorie certainly had her own style, built around constant praise. In her dealings with the kids she was mercurial, demonstrative - effusive, even. Many of them, especially the tutors, were slightly put off, if anything, by the overt attempts at "positive reinforcement." As Wanda later put it, "Mrs. Miles used to get on my nerves with all her praise." So Marjorie had one style of many that might have worked given the *real* key to success which the example of this program revealed: That is, *leave the kids alone*; *respect their ability to find their own approach to tutoring*; *trust them to make their own judgments and find their own answers*.

We saw what happened between Doug and Tyrone in this atmosphere. Doug decided to be a big brother to Tyrone, and concluded on his own that what Tyrone needed most of all was responsibility. So he set about teaching it to him in a way that may not have appealed to some enlightened modern teachers - by separating work from play and doling out the latter in exchange for the former; and by taking an authoritarian stance. But it was a way that made sense to Tyrone, and to which he responded. The remarkable thing about Marjorie's role in this is that when she had a disagreement with Doug over how to handle Tyrone, she yielded to Doug's better judgment, and let him proceed on his own.

When Paula was left to define her own approach, we saw how she drew on her own strengths to calm Richie down to a point where he could function calmly and productively. In fact, in Paula's case, one is left with the impression that if only the other adults (besides Marjorie) had not interfered, they would have finished out the year together.

The pages of this report, indeed, are filled with examples of kids using their own judgment to work their successes on difficult kids. Ron's gentle-tough approach to hesitant Gary; Suzanne's insistent style with escapist Iris; Carol's low-keyed attitude with withdrawn Marisa - not that these are based on careful calculation by the tutors of the optimal approach under the circumstances; but that's just the point. The approaches were chosen just as much according to each tutor's sense of where his own strengths lay, a sense which only the tutors themselves could read. A good deal of their success, it seems evident, was due to their being free to work in a style in which they were comfortable, and which thus fed their confidence. And these kids, some of them failures and misfits at home or at school, fairly exuded confidence at YTY. It was in the air.

Returning to Marjorie's role in establishing and maintaining this atmosphere, it might be well to recall some of the ways in which her respect and trust for the kids was made manifest. In the beginning, there was her pledge that the tutors would be considered as teachers, rather than high school students. The tutors naturally tested her on this, and she was smart enough to meet their challenges - by making sure they got a place to smoke, by letting them decide how to pick tutees, and so forth. Her pledge, indeed, was genuine, for although she knew the tutors were plagued with various problems, she declined to find out what any of them were, preferring to treat them as true colleagues. Then, the program under way, she was careful never to interpose herself between tutor and tutee. During tutoring she pointedly kept her distance unless invited to approach by the tutors. On the other hand, she was always available for consultation. This usually took place by a tutor's excusing himself from his tutee, then going off to confer with Marjorie on what to do next. The tutor was obviously protecting his authority in the eyes of the tutee by not asking for help in the tutee's presence. The autonomy and privacy enjoyed by the tutors is indicated in this brief dialogue between Ellen and Marjorie which took place before the bus arrived:

> Marjorie: Oh, good morning! How did you manage to get here so early?
> Ellen: Oh, I didn't go to the high school today.
> Marjorie: Oh, I'm sorry, Ellen, I didn't mean to be nosey.

Although Marjorie did indeed leave the kids alone, this is not to say that she neglected her responsibility or ignored her natural authority as an adult. I learned very early, in fact, how protective she was from outside visitors. The kids were aware that they were being given a chance which they cannot normally expect from adults, and they depended on Marjorie to preserve their unique position within the program. They realized, furthermore, that it was Marjorie who was ultimately responsible for what went on, and that it was not inconsistent with their autonomy for her to check their plans (which, in any case, was taken more as supportive than a policing gesture), to speak discreetly to a "colleague" who was falling severely behind in his responsibilities, to deliver a pep talk to the group from time to time, or to give them grades. It was also within her role as "chief colleague" to write those official commendatory letters to the tutors' homes - an act of brilliance and generosity which by all accounts had a dramatic impact on their self-esteem.

Perhaps there is no more convincing evidence of the absolutely pivotal importance of this one ingredient - the atmosphere of trust and respect, the willingness to leave the kids alone to do their job, which must emanate from the person in charge - than the events which took place when it was withdrawn. Some of the relationships which appeared strongest under Marjorie were not able to survive her replacement. As was hopefully made clear in the last chapter, moreover, the disintegration of the program could in no way be attributed to dislike for the children, lack of enthusiasm for the concept of YTY, lack of energy or dedication to the program's success, or any other such shortcoming of the new supervisor. Rather, it was her inability to allow the kids to work on their own without interference, supervision or even a little unsolicited "friendly advice." This was unquestionably the keystone of the entire YTY edifice. When it was removed, the program collapsed.

As long as the atmosphere at the Cobbleston YTY program was a healthy one, that is, as long as it had a supervisor who had faith in the ability of kids to make their own choices and decisions (including, for example, when to consult with the supervisor) - as long as that condition prevailed, both tutors and tutees thrived visibly. As the first-hand accounts in these pages show, participation in the program clearly made a significant difference in their lives, and this is so in spite of the possibility that a statistical analysis (of dubious validity in any case, with only seventeen tutors and seventeen tutees) might reveal no significant changes along such dimensions as grades, attendance, or test scores.

For one thing, the program naturally enough affects different individuals differently. Some tutors stress academics and basic skills in their tutoring approach. Others stress the interpersonal and social aspects of the relationship. The effects might be expected to be different in each case. Moreover, a tutee whose tutor is all wrapped up in the teaching of skills may be benefiting mostly from the personal contact; or, one whose tutor just wants to be his friend may go back and reapply himself in the classroom. This differentiation of effects is inescapable, and may well invalidate attempts to measure the program's success. For example, say two or three kids show dramatic improvement in their grades, while three or four others are still turned off in class but score much higher on standardized tests, and still another few increase their attendance at school. The record of the program would not be a remarkable one, since on no single dimension was there marked improvement for the program as a whole. Thus it might be concluded that YTY has some marginally positive effects on grades, test scores, and attendance, while in reality most individuals have benefited substantially in one way or another.

Another difficulty with trying to measure improvement as a result of YTY is the lack of a means for separating those changes which are due to YTY from those which have other causes. Or, how much of a particular change could be traced to YTY and how much to something else. Eleanor, for example, was recommended to the program because her grades the previous year had fallen far below her capabilities. By mid-Spring, after four months in YTY, they had climbed dramatically. Should YTY take credit? According to Eleanor, there's no relation between the two, she just "feels better" this year. But her mother says that last year her life was upset by problems with her boyfriend. So how is anyone to know whether or how much YTY influenced her higher grades this year?

Finally, it should be pointed out that the actual tutoring sessions took place four days a week for thirty minutes a day. Two hours per week out of the full lives of children is a minute slice. (Indeed, even during the week, pupils spend many more of their waking hours outside school than in it - a fact which teachers often forget.) And at Cobbleston, the kids had the benefit of Marjorie's presence, during which it could be said the program was operating with maximum effect, for slightly less than four months.

With all this in mind, it is all the more remarkable how much impact the program actually had on the kids involved. Most striking, perhaps, was the way tutors grew into the responsibility that was inherent in their job. Soon after I began visiting the program, for instance, Marjorie told me that one of the tutors, a girl, had been in a street fight, serious enough for her to have been arrested and charged with assault and battery, tried, and put on probation.

> She tore some girl to shreds! But she's so responsible here. She's like a teacher! She's got one of the hardest kids to work with, and she's so good! She has fantastic patience with her.

In her typically protective manner, Marjorie refused to tell me which tutor it was, saying only that it would be one of the last ones I'd expect. Months later, I learned who it was, and sure enough, as well as I thought I knew the kids, I never would have guessed her. Other examples have been recounted in detail. In fact, I believe this report to be, if nothing else, a sustained chronicle of high school kids acting, with a few exceptions, responsibly. It is as if they all had set out to demonstrate the truth in the belief that a person learns to be responsible by being put into a position of responsibility.

Far from feeling this responsibility as a burden, moreover, the tutors seemed to welcome it as a challenge. That is not to say that it was considered an easy job; indeed its difficulty, extreme in some cases, seemed only to inspire greater effort. The tutors knew they were on the line, that there was another person depending on them to provide help. They also knew they could do it. After all, hadn't they gone through the same skills-acquisition stages, faced the same growing-up problems just a few years before? Besides, there was help if they needed it from the supervisor. And, in most cases, the tutees were very anxious to learn. When the tutors were asked in their interviews what improvements (if any) they had seen in their tutees, they were all able to answer intelligently and specifically as to the positive changes. This means at the least they all were getting direct reinforcement from their tutoring activities.

Many tutors, also, were conscious of ways they had learned through tutoring. Such interview comments as "I've learned a lot of English things - different skills - that I never knew about," or "I love to read now. Like, I couldn't stand mythology in eighth grade; now I love it," or "I'm learning too: that I missed out on a lot when I was in his grade. Like consonant blends, vowels, prepositions. All those things I should've learned in the little grades when I was messing around. It helps me read better now, increased my vocabulary," were common. Although most of the tutors denied that their YTY experience had affected their grades, there was evidence that many of their grades had improved.

Perhaps as significant as the fact of having learned through tutoring is the new sense of awareness many tutors seemed to have acquired. Many spoke of being more conscious of the world around them: "It's helped me open my mind, see the world a little better;" "I see how kids have changed since I was a little kid;" "I know what teachers go through now, how they feel when something's gone wrong," etc. As to their own self-awareness, the lucidity and acumen of their interview responses in describing how and why they behaved as they did with their tutees is ample and convincing evidence. The tutors are constantly evaluating not just their tutees' progress, but their own performance.

The cumulative effect of all this is greater confidence and greater self-esteem. As one tutor described it, "My attitude is better. I've never been so patient before. And I talk more confidently to grown-ups now." A different result could hardly be expected with so much obvious success in a challenging and significant activity for which all credit goes rightfully to the tutor.

In this atmosphere of mutual respect and self-confidence, the tutees, of course, bloomed. While it was difficult to know what changes in the tutors could be attributed to YTY, the problem in many cases was not so great for the tutees. Eleanor taught Rose a skill - handwriting -

where her teacher had had no success. We know Diane learned to tell time from Ellen because her teacher never tried. William did get 100 on a spelling test in his class after working on the words with Larry. But perhaps more significantly, nearly all of the tutees who were unable to work productively in their classrooms - out of shyness, out of aggressiveness, or out of some kind of emotional strain - worked contentedly, even gleefully, with their tutors. In most cases, the difference seemed to be the special attention they got from the tutors. The attention was special in several ways. One is that it was individualized, one-to-one. But what made it really special was the interest, the sensitivity, and the inventiveness of the tutors. The meaning to the tutees of having a big kid lavish so much personal effort on a little one was reflected in the eyes of the tutees. Much of the time the eyes were serious, struggling with a problem or working on a project; but in between they were happy and at times downright adoring. This is another dimension that is difficult to measure. It was apparent from the promptness and the regularity with which they attend. But it was obvious from the look on their faces.

It would be a big mistake to conclude from the descriptions of this report that the kids involved in the Cobbleston YTY program were not ordinary. Indeed, if they were special in any way it was in the fact that they were selected because they had special problems. The tutors were underachieving, delinquent, or emotionally upset. The tutees were behind in their work or unable to get along with their classmates. In the tutoring program, these otherwise ordinary kids became quite extraordinary people, especially the tutors. They did it because for once they were in a situation where they could be in touch with themselves, in a significant activity with real-life consequences which they could handle and at which they could succeed - all of this in an atmosphere of respect, where they could grow in confidence and in the esteem of their colleagues, their teachers, their parents and, most important of all, themselves.

Epilogue

As the school year in which I observed Cobbleston's YTY program came to a close, I learned that Madalyn Solomon planned to continue and even expand it the following year. There was also the possibility that Marjorie Miles would be available to run it. So now, several weeks into the new fall semester, I called to find out what had happened. "Oh, yes. It's running again," Marjorie beamed into the phone, "but it's not like last year. I mean, everything's so much better, now that I know what I'm doing. The kids are so fantastic you really must come out and see for yourself."

Needless to say, I needed no more encouragement than that. A few days later I was meeting Marjorie, not at Kurtz School, but at Warren, Cobbleston's other elementary school. "The program has doubled," she told me. "Fifteen tutors come here and fifteen more go to Kurtz." Who was at the other school? "Ruth Miller, who was my aide last year, and indispensable. We switch schools every day. [This awkward arrangement was made necessary by the inability to obtain a teaching license which would allow her legally to be in charge of school children.] Tomorrow I'll be over at Kurtz and Ruth will be here." Another difference, I learned, was in the amount of time the kids had for tutoring. Because of budget shortages, the high school was working on split sessions. Under this system, class periods had been shortened to just 28 minutes, and the upper grades were being dismissed for the day at noon.

Since the tutors had only two periods for YTY, this meant that, after time on the bus was subtracted, they had a total of only thirty minutes or so at the elementary schools. Last year they'd had nearly a half hour to prepare before the tutees came in; now they had no time at all. A further difficulty this year was that they no longer had a room of their own. Last year they'd been in the school's resource room, where they could store their materials and decorate the walls. This year they used the library at Warren School and an art room at Kurtz, both of which, of course, were in constant use by other children, and neither of which could offer any storage space.

What has been the effect of these changes on the program? As might be expected, it has been to tighten things up considerably. Above all, it has necessitated careful and deliberate planning by the tutors, not only because there is no longer any daily preparation time, but also because of the storage problem. Since there was just one supply of materials for the two sections of the program, and since all the materials were kept in a single cabinet of the Warren School, tutors had to know ahead of time what they intended to use on a given day. So now they were all using the non-tutoring day (Thursday this year) to plan for the week, and their plans included requests for whatever materials their lessons required. These in turn were set out each day before the tutors arrived, so that they could get right to work. The tutors had had little difficulty accepting this arrangement. In short, as Marjorie was the first to point out, these apparent constraints on the program were not without their positive effects: the tutors were all learning to plan a whole week's lessons in advance (which they could change any time - at their discretion - as long as they gave a day's notice).

Those time and space restrictions aside, however, the program did seem better. And one way or another every improvement was traceable to the previous year's experience. For example, where last year the program met with skepticism - if not resistance - on the part of the various school personnel, this year there was cooperation from the staff, based on respect for a proven product. The word had gotten around among the high school kids, too, and this time rather than having to seek out recruits, Marjorie found plenty of students eager to sign up. "This meant," as Marjorie put it, "that they were all motivated right from the start. Not like last year, when it was like pulling teeth to get them started."

As for Marjorie herself, the big difference is that:

> I'm so relaxed this year. Last year I was always panicky; I just didn't know what I was doing. Not that I know what I'm doing this year, really, but it sure is easier to relax now. I was always holding up a guard last year - in case, you know, I fell on my face I wouldn't have so far to fall. Now I'm much more confident, and it shows up in all sorts of ways. Like the way the kids interact with us (me and Ruth). They come to us now and tell us about their outside problems. Last year they'd do it, but in off ways, like talking loud to their friends. Now they're very direct: Henry, one of the tutors, just tells me outright how much the program means to him. Can you imagine that happening last year?
>
> Also, this year I say to the kids, 'Look, this is what you must do (i.e., plan for each day and evaluate each day); it's not much, but you must do it.' I'm not frightened to say that now, like I was last year - afraid they'd give me a fight or something.
>
> And attendance is really good this year, too. And if they're out a day, they'll come in and say why.
>
> Another big difference is the way the staffs of the schools really believe in us. Basically they never thought it'd work, but now they see. We've sort of proven ourselves. At the Warren School, they didn't know us. We spent the first few weeks in a classroom, then we got moved into one end of the library, where we're more on display. I've had teachers come up to me and say, 'Why, you really have them teaching those little kids. And you should see some of them back in their classrooms. It's amazing.' So now they're coming to us for advice.

Several visits to the tutoring sessions confirmed Marjorie's description: the program indeed appeared to be even better than last year's - a possibility I could scarcely have taken seriously back then. While last year's program at its best had been purposeful and productive, there was never such a unanimity of purpose as was evidenced now, nor such a pervasive air of serenity surrounding the kids. To be sure, there was no lack of normal dynamics - the little crises, conflicts, and confrontations which characterize all interpersonal relations. But the overall atmosphere seemed to be one which would give maximum support for the working out of individual problems - an atmosphere of caring and trust.

Both Marjorie and the kids were particularly fortunate to have Ruth Miller as the other person in charge. She had played an important role in the program during the early stages of its first year; if the account of that year slights her contribution, it is because she had soon after been burdened with the task of running the resource center, and by the time my observations began her active participation had been sharply curtailed. But now she could devote all her time and talents to YTY, and the program was the better for it. Her style, entirely different from Marjorie's, was nonetheless effective. Marjorie had often expressed her pleasure - if not her relief - in having Ruth to work with: "I'm always in such a tizzy, you know, just flying from pillar to post. Ruth is the great steadying influence. I'd never do it without her."

The two of them, indeed, were working together like a practiced team. Each day after tutoring they met at the Warren School, where all the materials were kept for the night. The time was spent in detailed exchange of accounts of the morning's activities. Since they'd be in opposite schools the following day, it was necessary for them to stay minutely informed. Necessity, however, seemed beside the point during these sessions. Both Marjorie and Ruth were so involved in the daily life of the program they could barely wait to tell each other.

As before, I think the best way to convey what was really happening here is to focus on the participants themselves. Very briefly this time, I'll present two of the thirty pairs of learning partners, then describe in somewhat more detail the development of one of the tutors - Ellen - who is one of the five who returned from last year's program.

Sandra and Dale

On a visit to the Warren School during the week before Halloween, the first thing I noticed was a carpet of newspapers spread out on the library floor. Kneeling on it were Sandra (a tutor), and two little kids, Dale and Patricia. Dale, I learned, was Sandra's tutee, and Patricia was there because her tutor was absent that day.

They'd just cut the top off a pumpkin.

Marjorie was there, too: she was the only one brave enough to stick her hand into the pumpkin's gooshy insides to scoop out the seeds. This was evidently a new experience for Dale, who seemed fascinated by the quantity of seeds. Marjorie was telling him about how they could be roasted, oiled, salted, and eaten, and promised it would be done. The pumpkin, I was told, was to become the head of a pumpkin man. Henry, another tutor, had brought in an old pair of trousers and a suit. He was outside with his two tutees, stuffing the clothes with fallen leaves to make a dummy. Now they had to decide on a face to give the pumpkin. Marjorie filled in some more details.

> This was Sandra's idea. She wanted to do something special for Dale because he's been doing so well on the exercises she makes up for him. When Dale first came here, his teacher said he was a non-reader, he was disruptive, and didn't relate at all to the other children. But now, he's very calm; he has a much better image of

> himself, and has gained a lot of self-confidence just in the short time he's been here. And with Sandra he's reading up a blue blaze. When I told her he had trouble reading in his class she said, "It's just not possible. He's the smartest kid in here, he doesn't even need to be here."

And Ruth added,

> That's right. Sandra's asked me several times, 'Why is Dale here? He doesn't need it, he can read.'

Dorothy and Jose

Dorothy, a black eleventh grader, began the year tutoring Charlene, the niece of another tutor. Effie, the aunt, was overprotective of her niece, and tried to act as if Charlene was her personal responsibility. Alternately nattering and cajoling, Effie finally persuaded her niece to ask for her as a tutor. Dorothy, a bit hurt, was left with no one. For the time being, she teamed up with a friend, Dinah, whose tutee, Kee, seemed to welcome the extra attention. Meanwhile, in checking with the teachers for a likely replacement, Marjorie heard about a new boy who'd just moved from Puerto Rico. He spoke not a word of English and was so shy he appeared to be almost in a state of shock. Although fortunately his first grade teacher knew Spanish, most of what went on in the classroom still escaped him. The next Thursday, at their workshop, Marjorie told her tutors about him, and Dinah volunteered Dorothy's name. Dorothy, she pointed out, had had three years of Spanish, so she would be able to talk to Jose. Dorothy seemed intrigued by the idea of a practical use for her Spanish. Jose's teacher was notified and the next day she brought him to the library. Marjorie picks up the narrative:

> Jose was terrified and crying when his teacher brought him down. There was no way he was going to be left here. The next day Dorothy and Dinah both went to his classroom, but he still wouldn't come. Then yesterday Dorothy

> went back alone. His teacher was absent, and he was feeling a little lost, so the two of them had a talk. Then today, she went and got him and he came. Just look at them together. I'm so excited.

Sure enough, there they were, looking through a bi-lingual picture book. Each picture had a simple sentence written both in Spanish and English, which Dorothy would read and Jose would repeat. Along the way, Dorothy would ask some questions, either in Spanish or in English, and when Jose answered he was rewarded with a big smile. Dorothy's pleasure with the response she was getting was as obvious as Jose's enthusiastic involvement in their activity: every time they returned to the top of a page in the big book, he leaped from his seat in his eagerness to go on to the next picture. Jose probably wasn't aware he was doing this; he was still almost whispering his answers, concentrating fiercely on the task at hand.

As Marjorie observed, her new program contained

> So many pairs of kids which would be really interesting to study. Take Dorothy's friend Dinah for instance, and her tutee, Kee. His family, who were Chinese, rerecently immigrated to this country, and Kee had not adjusted well in his classroom. He was especially at odds with his teacher, with whom he pretended he couldn't speak English. Yet he chattered on freely with Dinah, whom he came to see every day; and this soon led to her discovery that Kee didn't know the alphabet or, more precisely, that he didn't understand that the letters had sounds [Chinese characters are not phonetic.] His teacher hadn't realized this. So now Dinah and Kee worked exclusively on the alphabet.

Ellen

Perhaps the most interesting case, however, especially by way of contrast with the preceding year, was that of Ellen - whom the reader may recall as the tutor who was hard to pin down, alternating toughness or indifference with patience and sensitivity. Of all the tutors, Ellen seemed to have the most stake in projecting an image of coolness, as if she'd be compromised by admitting she cared. She was also the most demonstratively skeptical of the promise that the tutors would be considered colleagues, and their opinions taken seriously. This guarded, ambivalent attitude lasted the duration of the program in its first year.

Then, in June, Ellen was told of a program which was opening up for the summer, in which 8-year-old children with reading problems would be taught reading and related skills using a language experience approach. The program staff would consist of five teachers, five teacher aides, and five student assistants; first priority for the student assistants was given to the YTY tutors, and Ellen signed up. The teacher who was in charge of the program, Laurie Bancroft, having learned from Madalyn Solomon that the student assistants had all had experience working with children, decided that all fifteen employees would be considered staff, and share responsibilities equally. Only one teacher expressed any hesitance with this arrangement, but she, like the others, was willing to try it.

At the orientation sessions, the former tutors, Ellen in particular, were full of questions regarding their status. According to Laurie Bancroft, "They wanted to know: 'Can we work with the kids? Can we do our own planning? Or will we just be aides, marking papers and cleaning up?' Ellen wanted to know what they'd be paid, and questioned whether $1.60 an hour was enough." As Madalyn Solomon, who'd organized the program, described it, "We told the student assistants they would participate as full staff members, but they still asked us if they were going to be tested. It was just hard for them to believe we meant it." What finally happened is best recounted in Ellen's words:

> At first I didn't like it at all, I didn't feel right. They said, 'Call us by our first names,' but I couldn't do that, it felt too weird.
>
> In the beginning, we thought our job would be like cleaning up. The teachers didn't realize we could handle kids or think up activities for them and everything. They thought we'd only want to do the little chores, like aides. And we thought that was all they'd let us do.
>
> Then as it went on it just got better. It ended up I could do anything a teacher could do. Our team - me and the teacher and the teacher assistant - had nine kids, and we each took three kids. I had the top three, the best readers. But I could take the whole group, too.

As it turned out, the program as a whole was a smashing success - due in no small measure to the contribution of the student assistants. "Those teachers were so turned on," recalled Ms. Solomon, "they would make a special trip just to tell me how great the program was. Now, when staff makes a special effort to tell you how great their own program is - and a summer program at that! - that's really something. They just raved about the kids - how experienced they were, their ease in handling kids, their ability to plan, their familiarity with materials. They also said they thought the kids deserved to be paid more money, they were earning it. And Ellen: she was the real success story. She assumed all kinds of responsibility and followed through on it. She was so excited about everything - she'd even come back after noon to do more."

Ellen? Excited? I asked Laurie Bancroft about her.

> She was amazing. Her attitude at the beginning was: How much will we be paid? But she turned out to be the most sincere, and did a lot of extra work. She especially got involved with - and took on - Kenneth, a problem child who would do for Ellen what he wouldn't do for any other teacher - and that warmed her heart.
>
> We held an evaluation session when the program was over, and the question of salary came up. Back at the beginning

there was one teacher who'd been annoyed when the student assistants asked about their pay. She said, 'When I was in school I was thankful to get a summer job at all - I wouldn't dream of complaining about how much I was paid.' But now this same teacher was saying, 'We used the teacher assistants and the student assistants exactly the same way. I think it's a crime the student assistants weren't paid more.'

We also talked about placing some of the little children in YTY the coming year. Ellen was very concerned about some of them, especially Kenneth. She said, 'I really don't think we should put this kid in YTY unless the tutor is really sincere. Some tutors might not take their job seriously or might not be reliable.' I'd heard that Ellen was a big cutter when she was in YTY, so her change in attitude was kind of interesting. I understand that she wound up with Kenneth as her own tutee this year....

With Ellen working in YTY again this year, I went back to interview her. Here are some excerpts:

Q: Did you learn anything new about kids during the summer program?
A: Oh yeah, lots. Like how to discipline them. Like last year if I saw a kid walking down the hall causing trouble, I'd just say, too bad, I just don't know how to handle it. Now I'd know what to do. And like how to work with a group, instead of just one kid, like YTY. And I was used to not working where other people could see you, but it wasn't like that this summer. Another thing is, kids have a lot more feeling than I ever thought. Like a teacher would have an idea and another would say, 'Oh no, the kids would get upset by that.' I hadn't realized that kind of thing, so now I think about how it'll affect a kid.
Q: Have you noticed any changes in yourself?
A: Well, when I went in, I didn't want to go to college, so I wasn't too keen on being a teacher. But now I really want to be a teacher. This is a problem, 'cause I never really wanted to go to school much, but you have to if you want to be a teacher. So now I don't know what I'm going to do.

Another difference is I always saw teachers bringing things for kids and I just couldn't see that. But this summer I was bringing in little things for them all the time. Like we went on a trip to Wild West City, so I felt bad 'cause the kids didn't have anything, so I'd bring in cowboy hats or holsters or something. And on

> the bus coming back, I'd buy them candy or bubble gum, you know, like that.
>
> Q: Did your experience in YTY help you in the summer program?
>
> A: Oh yeah: I got used to working with kids. And when they brought out the equipment, like SRA, I knew how to use them. Now I've seen everything at YTY. The program is better this year; it's more open. And we can check into their records if we want. I guess we could last year, too, but I wasn't aware of them. It's better, but I guess I'm spoiled. We got used to working with a bunch of kids, and YTY is only one. We feel we know so much now....

Could success have spoiled Ellen? In some ways the answer appeared to be yes. But the overall improvement since the previous year was so remarkable that the conceit was, by comparison, easy to take. At least for Marjorie, who describes the "new" Ellen this way:

> Those kids were so good in that summer program, and they knew it. Laurie told me they insisted on being evaluated on these official forms, so you know they knew what a good job they'd done. And it went straight to their heads, some of them. Like Ellen and Larry are back in YTY and they're so dazzled by their own brilliance they're just impossible. They take this holier-than-thou attitude with the other tutors. They just know it all.
>
> You know, the tutors all write their plans for the week on Thursday, including the materials they'll need, and then Ruth and I read them. Well, Ellen's made it clear she wants no advice or suggestions from us, she doesn't even want me to read her plans, except to find out what materials she wants. She does communicate through them, though, indirectly. Like one time she put 'I think he's ready for digraphs and blends now.' So I went to the resource center, got some materials on it, and left them out on the table and said 'If anyone's ready for blends and digraphs, there's some stuff here,' and she used them. I had to learn. Before, I'd gotten her some really nice stuff on motorcycles - you know how crazy she is about motorcycles - and I called out to her, 'Oh look, Ellen, I got this stuff on motorcycles, wouldn't you like to use it?' She glanced at it, and under any other circumstances she'd have grabbed it, but she wouldn't touch it now. I know she's just asserting her independence,

> so I don't mind playing her game. Her tutor's doing real well, so I have no complaints.
>
> One thing is really funny. Last summer she was looking in the official folder of one of the little kids who'd also been in YTY, and inside was one of those evaluation forms filled out by the tutor. Ellen was just floored. The next time she saw me she said, 'You never told us those things would actually be part of their permanent record!' I just said, 'Of course they're in the records, and of course I told you they would be. You just wouldn't believe me.' So now Ellen's notes and plans are just incredibly neat - now that she knows what'll happen to them. You should see them, they're like a beautiful picture. And the language she uses is all flowery and elaborate, like 'In my opinion, Kenneth accomplished some significant things today...'

Summary

So once again YTY was flourishing in Cobbleston. This time thirty high school kids were being given a chance to discover talents and skills in themselves and to put them to work in a meaningful way. All concerned were benefiting from the previous year's experience: Marjorie, having learned from past successes and mistakes, had started over with a new confidence that infused the program; in spite of some nagging inconveniences, the returning tutors enjoyed an obvious sense of "veteranship" and, if not in the eyes of the other tutors, for sure in their own eyes, of superiority as well; the new tutors had a sense of security and purpose which had been missing the year before, partly because they entered the program already persuaded of its worth, partly because the program itself was better organized. The contrast between this year's and last year's tutors was so marked, in fact, that Marjorie strongly suspected she'd wound up this time with "top drawer" students. Then she tested them, and once again it was confirmed that they were average kids at best, with no more claim to exceptionality than the chance by which they were in a situation which allowed it to emerge. This situation was the creation of the two leaders, Marjorie and Ruth, who had the understanding and the sensitivity to strike a very delicate balance. At one point, Marjorie told me, "It can't just be trial and error. There has to be structure behind the kids. They need support, and to know there's support behind them. You can't simply unleash high school kids and let them go." True enough, but there is structure that confines and structure that liberates. To make that distinction in practice and to know where to draw the line is one of the most important - and most difficult - tasks facing a teacher, or any other leader for that matter. The tutors at Cobbleston could accept a structure which they knew was tendered in an atmosphere of respect for their abilities. And they found that the structure helped free their potential to excel.